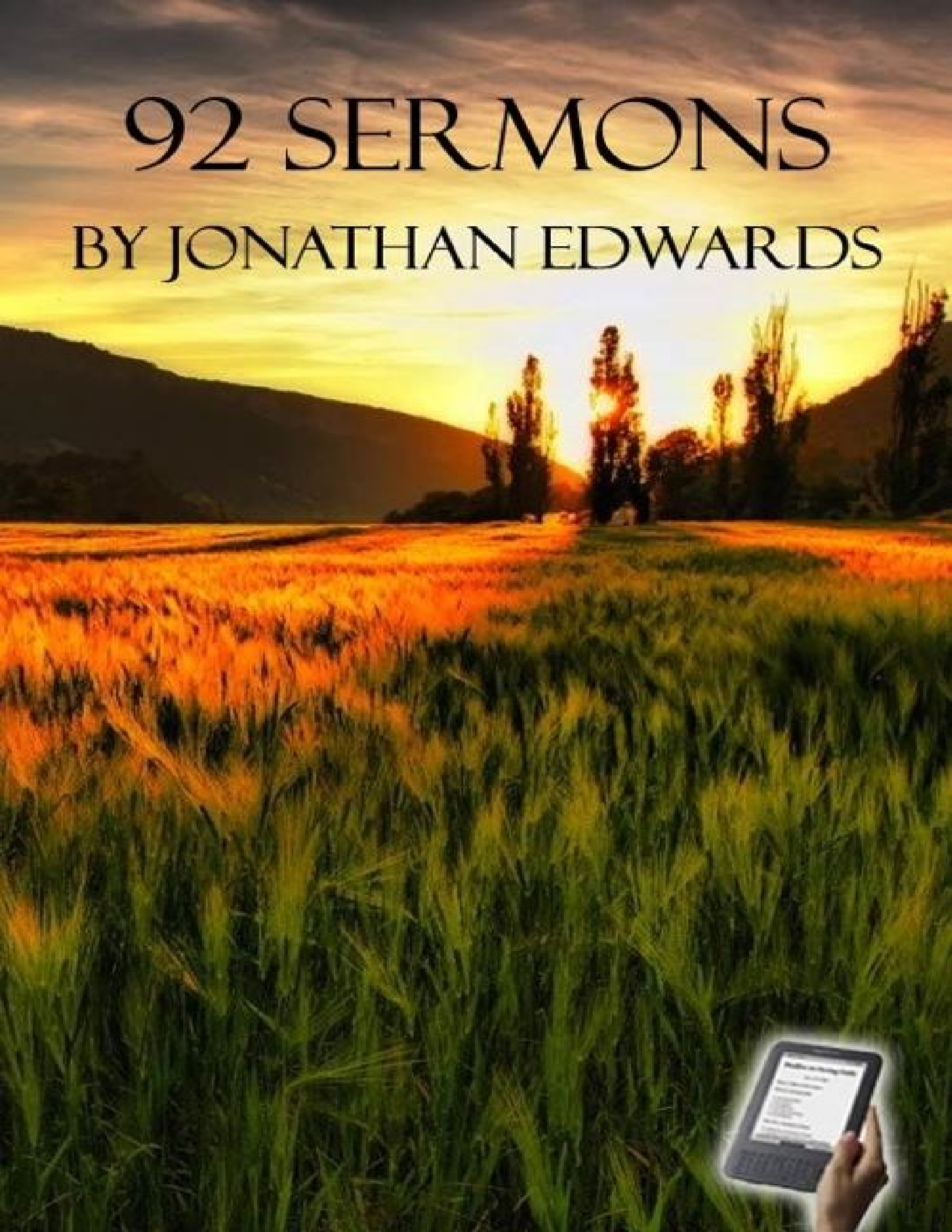
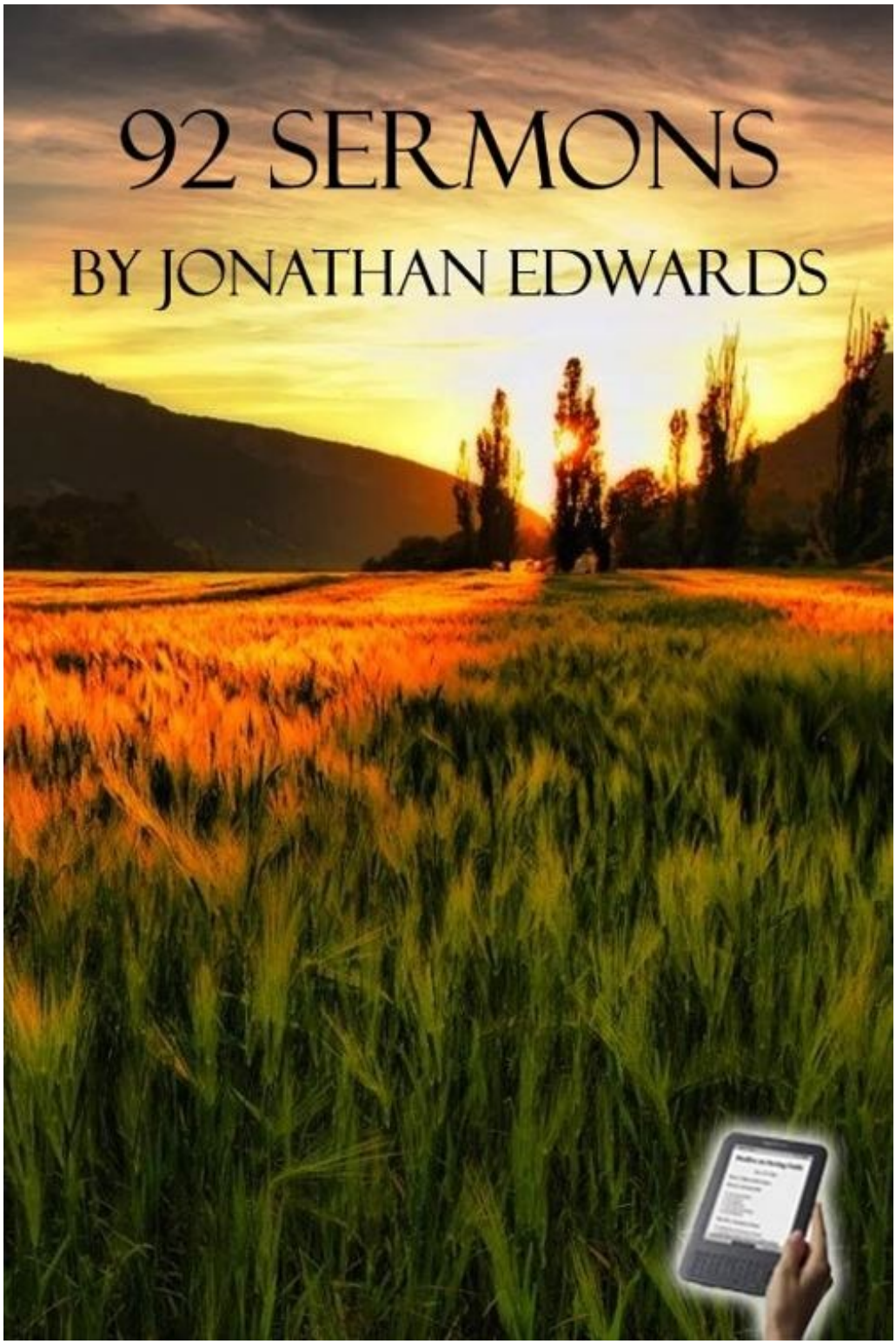
92 SERMONS

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS





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92 Sermons of Jonathan Edwards

by Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758

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The Scripture is the Word of God

Dated November, 1753

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." -- 2 Timothy 3:16

I. There must be some Word of God.

'Tis unreasonable to think that God would always keep silence and never say anything to mankind.

God has made mankind and given him Reason and Understanding.

Has made him the chief of all the creatures.

Given him reason that he might know God and serve Him.

Did not give the other creatures reason: He did make 'em to serve Him.

Other creatures are made for man.

Man was made for God: to serve God, or else he was made for nothing.

But we may be sure He did not make such a creature as man for nothing.

But how unreasonable is it to think that God would make us for Himself and never say anything to us.

God is the King that rules over all nations.

But how unreasonable is it to think that God would make us for Himself and never say anything to us.

God is the King that rules over all nations.

But how unreasonable is it to suppose that He should be a King and never say anything to His subjects.... be a King and never tell them what His will or what His commands are, that His subjects may obey Him.

Is as a Father: all His Family.

But will a father be always dumb and silent, etc.?

God has given mankind speech: so that they are able to speak and make known their minds to one another.

And therefore 'tis unreasonable to think that God never would speak to men and make known His mind to them.

We need to have God teach us as much as a child needs to be taught by his father.

And since God has given mankind understanding He doubtless will teach him and instruct him.

How can we know Him to worship God if we have no Word of God to tell us?

We should not know what way of worship would please Him... whether to

pray to Him or to sing or to keep the Sabbath, or be baptized, or come to sacrament, or what else we shall do.

'Tis certain God has made us for another world.... Men but a little while here.

And how shall we know how God will do with us in another world?

How shall we know how He will punish such as do wickedly in another [world]?

What He will do for good men in another [world]?

Whether He will forgive us after we have sinned?

How shall we know what He expects we should do that we may be forgiven?

In what He will save....Whether He will forgive great sins.

What will men do when they come to die if there be no Word of God to tell 'em?

How should we ever know how the world was made?

How would we know how God made man at first?

We see men in this world are very wicked: the world is full of wickedness everywhere.

Certainly God did not make man so.

How shall we know how mankind came to be so wicked?

We see how the world is full of death: full of war and all manner of misery.

How shall we know how misery and death came, etc.?

And how shall we know what way of salvation there is?

Where shall we find one to be our Savior that will stand for us .... if the Word of God don't tell us?

How shall we know what God will do with the world at last? how the world will come to an end?

We see that God is kind to mankind: takes care of 'em.

Therefore He can't leave 'em in darkness and take no care to teach 'em.

We see what necessity mankind stand in , of a Word of God to teach 'em when we consider how it is in those countries where they have no Word of God.

They are all in darkness and blindness about God and Divine things.

They think there is a God.

Yet don't know what He is.

Many think there is [are] a great many gods.

Worship 'graven images' and stones.

Worship the devil.

Don't know how to serve God.

Know nothing how the world was made.... how man was made.

Know nothing what God will do with men in another world.

Don't know how men shall obtain forgiveness of their sin.

Some think [by] offering their own children....

Thus we see there must certainly be some Word of God.

But were is any Word of God if it ben't [be not] in the Bible?

The Heathen han't [have not] no Word of God amongst them.

The Bible therefore is the Word of God, must be.

The Bible gives right notions concerning God.

Tells how God made the world.... made men.... how men became wicked.

What God will do with men in another world.

What way we may have the forgiveness of sin.

What is the way of salvation?

What God's mind, and [what His] will, is.

All the Rules and Commandments in the Bible are holy.

Here told what man's duty is in many things.

All sin is forbidden.

How God will be served.

The great things God has done for His people through all ages.

What the Savior did and suffered: how He ascended into Heaven.

How the world will come to an end.

How God will judge the world.

Another thing that shows that the Scriptures are the Word of God is this: —

That when God told the wise and holy men to write the Bible He gave 'em power to work great MIRACLES, to convince men that it was His work.

Moses was a man that wrote all the first part of the Bible.

And God, to show that the Word he wrote was His word....

And so the other Prophets that wrote other parts.

Jesus Christ gave us the Scriptures of the New Testament. He spoke the Word of God.

He, to show that His Word was the Word of God, wrought great miracles.

He told His Disciples to write down what He said.... enabled them to do great miracles.

The Apostle Paul.

That there was such a man as Christ.... that great miracles [were wrought] even His enemies own: none deny it.

Another thing that shows the Scriptures to be the Word of God is that the Scripture FORETELLS a great many things.

The Old Testament that was given to the Jews a great while before Christ was born foretold Christ's coming.

And a great many things concerning Him. All which are FULFILLED.

The Scriptures of the New Testament foretell a great many things.... all came to pass.

The Jews should become a *distinct* nation.... that the Pope shall arise.... many turn Papists.... just as it is.

The Scriptures we here read is the same Word that was given of old.

The same Word has been kept all along: it has not been changed.

Here it still is the same language in which it was written at first.

It must be the same that the Jews had, and that God's People had in Christ's and the Apostle's time.

It could not be altered since, because it was scattered about a great many nations all over the world.... which have had it ever since.

Therefore the world could not be cheated.

The Jews, to whom the Old Testament was given: they remain a distinct People still, and have had the Old testament amongst 'em, written in their own language.

They are all over the world and can't alter it.

The Scripture has all along been among people that have been against one another in their OPINIONS.... could not agree to alter it.... if one altered the other would find it out.

Another thing that shows that the Scripture is the Word of God is this: —

That the Scripture has been the means of enlightening so many nations.

Many nations formerly in great darkness: but now...

All the greatest nations of the world....

No people in the world can come to have right notions of God and of another would any other way than by his Word.

Another thing that shows [it, is]

... Great opposition: the Devil and wicked men make against it.

Another thing that shows [that it is] the Word of God is this: it has PREVAILED against such great opposition.

When it first came abroad in the world all the wicked set themselves against it... kings ... armies... [Christians] put to cruel deaths ... yet it PREVAILED... overcame all the greatest and strongest nations.

Then there is this thing: those [who] first preached were poor men.

So many nations never could have been made to believe it if men had

made it.

Not only foolish men, little men, but great men and wise men.

Another thing: no other Word ever was used as the means of bringing men to know the true God but the Scriptures.

Where the Scriptures have come there has been light: all the rest of the world has remained in darkness. So 'tis now all over the world.

Another thing that shows [it] is this: no man could make such a Book as the Bible...

It must be made by wicked men or good men... Wicked men would not make it. Good men could not.

Another thing: no Book reaches the hearts of men so much. No word so AWAKENS the conscience. No word is so powerful to change the heart. Great many have been made 'new men:' very wicked men.

No word so powerful to the Bible. Better they are the more they love it... the more they are convinced that it is the Word of God. The more wicked men [are] the more they are AGAINST IT.

APPLICATION:

1. How thankful we should be to God...

2. Hence we may learn that all the Scripture says to us is certainly true.

God knows... God cannot lie... God is very angry for sin.

About another world. There is another world. Good men die.

About Hell. The Scripture says there is a furnace of fire.

God will not hear. No rest.

Many are ready to think that it may be there is none.

About Heaven. about the Day of Judgment: rise again.

About the sorrowful, miserable condition man is in.

About the way of salvation.

Christ is the Son of God. No other Savior. He will save all that come to him.

About the mystery of being 'born again.'

Some are ready to say in their hearts there is no such thing.

What we must be in order to go to Heaven —

Therefore let all men that are not 'born again' consider these things.

All these are not seeking their salvation.

3. Hence 'tis worth the while to take a great deal of pains to learn to read and understand the Scriptures.

I would have you all of you think of this.

When there is such a book that you may have, how can you be contented without being able to read it?

How does it make you feel when you think there is a Book that is God's own Word? That tells...

And you think with yourself that you are not able to read it.... See and think about it. All that you know is only what others tell you... see nothing with your own eyes.

Especially I would have you that are young people take notice of these things.

Parents should take care that their children learn...

This will be the way to be kept from the Devil… Devil can't bear [the Bible.] Kept from Hell. To be happy for ever.

But if you let the Word of God alone, and never use, and you can't expect the benefits of it…

You must not only hear and read, etc., but you must have it sunk down into your heart. Believe. Be affected. Love the Word of God. Written in your heart.

Must not only read and hear, but DO the things. Otherwise no good; but will be the worse for it.

And you should endeavor to understand. To that end to learn the English tongue.

If you had the Bible in your own language, I should not say so much.

Endeavor to promote your children's learning to English.

You that can read should often read… meditate… pray that God would enlighten you.

Consider how much it is worth the while to go often to your Bible to hear the great God Himself speak to you.

There you may hear Christ speak.

How much better must we think this is than the word of men. Better than the word of the wisest man of the world.

How much wiser is God than man.

Here all is true; nothing false.

Here all is wise; nothing foolish.

This is the GREAT LIGHT God has given to the world. To make use of

this is the way to walk in the Light... to have our souls filled with Light. If we neglect this we shall walk in darkness.

We should value this more than the light of the sun. We see the light of the sun does a great deal of good... gives light... pleasant to see... 'tis comfortable... it gives life.

So Scripture gives light... gives life.

Should hear the Word: come to meeting. 'Tis the way to have God's mercy, to seek God in His Word. There we may expect to meet with God. God will respect His own Word for the good of men: what great good has been done.

God has often made it a means of great good. Conversion of many souls. Great joy of many. Many have been comforted in affliction... in death.

This will be the way to be wise with the most excellent wisdom.

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The Character of Paul an Example to Christians

Dated February 1739/1740. Four sermons.

***"Brethren, be followers of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example."* -- Philippians 3:17**

Subject: We ought to follow the good example of the Apostle Paul.

The apostle in the foregoing part of the chapter, had been telling how he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and in the text he urges that his example should be followed.

He does this in two ways.

I. He exhorts the Philippian Christians to follow his example. “Brethren be followers together of me.” He exhorts them to be followers of him *together*; that is, that they should all follow his example with one heart and soul, agreeing in it, and that all, as much as in them lay, should help and assist each other in it.

II. That they should take particular notice of others that did so, and put peculiar honor on them, which is implied in the expression in the latter part of the verse, “mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

DOCTRINE

We ought to follow the good examples of the apostle Paul. We are to consider that the apostle did not say this of himself from an ambitious spirit, from a desire of being set up as a pattern, and eyed and imitated as an example to other Christians. His writings are not of any private interpretation, but he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost directed that the good examples of the apostle Paul should be noticed by other Christians and imitated. And we are also to consider that this is not a command to the Philippians only, to whom the epistle was more immediately directed, but to all those for whose use this epistle was written, for all Christians to the end of the world. For though God so ordered it, that the epistles of the apostles were mostly written on particular occasions and directed to particular churches, yet they were written to be of universal use. And those occasions were so ordered in the wisdom of Divine Providence that they are a part of that infallible rule of faith and manners which God has given to the Christian church to be their rule in all ages. And the precepts that we find in those epistles are no more to be regarded as precepts intended only for those to whom the epistle was sent than the ten commandments that were spoken from mount Sinai to the children of Israel are to be regarded as commands intended only for that people. And when we are directed to follow the good examples of the apostle Paul by the Holy Ghost, it is not merely as we are to imitate whatever we see that is good in anyone, let him be how

he may. But there are spiritual obligations that lie on Christians to follow the good examples of this great apostle. And it has pleased the Holy Ghost in an especial manner to set up the apostle Paul, not only as a teacher of the Christian church, but as a patter to other Christians. The greatest example of all, that is set before us in Scripture to imitate, is the example of Jesus Christ, which he set us in his human nature, and when in his state of humiliation. This is presented to us not only as a great pattern, but as a perfect rule. And the example of no man is set forth, as our rule, but the example of Christ. We are commanded to follow the examples which God himself set us, or the acts of the divine nature. Eph. 5:1, "Be ye therefore followers of God , as dear children." And Mat. 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But the example of Christ Jesus, when on earth, is more especially our pattern. For though the acts of the divine nature have the highest possible perfection, and though is inimitable perfection is our best example, yet God is so much above us, his nature is infinitely different from ours, that it is not possible that his acts should be so accommodated to our nature and circumstances, as to be an example of so great and general use, as the perfect example in our nature which Christ has set us. Christ, though a divine person, was man, as we are men. And not only so, but he was, in many respects, a partaker of our circumstances. He dwelt among men. He depended on food and raiment, and such outward supports of life, as we do. He was subject to the changes of time, and the afflictions and calamities of this evil world, and to abuse from men's corruptions, and to temptations from Satan, as we are; was subject to the same law and rule that we are, sued the same ordinances, and had many of our trials, and greater trials than we. So that Christ's example is the example that is chiefly offered in Scripture for our imitation. But yet the example of some that are fallen creatures, as we are, may in some respects be more accommodated to our circumstances, and more fitted for our instructions, than the example of Jesus Christ. For though he became man as we are, and was like us, and was in our circumstances in so many respects, yet in other things there was a vast difference. He was the head of the church, and we are the members. He is Lord of all, we are his subjects and disciples. And we need an example, that shall teach and direct us how to behave towards Christ our Lord and head. And this we may have better in some, that have Christ for their

Lord as well as we, than in Christ himself. But the greatest difference lies in this, that Christ had no sin, and we all are sinful creatures, all carry about with us a body of sin and death. It is said that Christ was made like to us in all things, sin only excepted. But this was excepted, and therefore there were many things required of us, of which Christ could to give us an example. Such as repentance for sin, brokenness of spirit of sin, mortification of lust, warring against sin. And the excellent example of some, that are naturally as sinful as we has this advantage, that we may regard it as the example of those, who were naturally every way in our circumstances, and labored under the same natural difficulties, and the same opposition of heart to that which is good, as ourselves; which tends to engage us to give more heed to their example, and the more to encourage and animate us to strive to follow it. And therefore we find that the Scripture does not only recommend the example of Christ, but does also exhibit some mere men, that are of like passions with ourselves, as patterns for us to follow. So it exhibits the eminent saints of the Old Testament, of whom we read in the Scripture, that they inherit the promises. Heb. 6:12, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews (Heb. 11), a great number of eminent saints are mentioned as patterns for us to follow. Abraham is, in a particular manner, set forth as an example of his faith, and as the pattern of believers. Rom. 4:12, "And the father of circumcision to them, that are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised." And so the prophets of the Old Testament are also recommended as patterns. Jam. 5:10, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." And so eminently holy men under the New Testament, apostles and others, that God sent forth to preach the gospel, are also examples for Christians to follow. Heb. 13:7, "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." But of all mere men, no one is so often particularly set forth in the Scripture, as a pattern for Christians to follow, as the apostle Paul. Our observing his holy conversation as our example, is not only insisted on in the text, but also 1 Cor. 4:16, "Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me." And chap. 11:1, "Be ye followers of me as I also am of

Christ." And 1 Thes. 1:6. Where the apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians for imitating his example; "and ye became followers of us." And 2 Thes. 3:7, he insists on this as their duty, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us."

For the more full treatment of this subject I shall,

I. Particularly mention many of the good examples of the apostle Paul that we ought to imitate. Which I shall treat of not merely as a doctrine, but also in the way of application.

II. I shall show under what strict obligation we are to follow the good examples of this apostle

I. I shall particularly mention many of those good examples of the apostle Paul that we ought to imitate. And that I may be more distinct, I shall,

First, mention those things that respect his watchfulness for the good of his own soul.

Second, those virtues in him that more immediately respected God and Christ.

Third, those that more immediately respect men.

Fourth, those that were exercised in his behavior, both towards God and men.

First, we ought to follow the good example that the apostle Paul has set us in his seeking the good of his own soul.

1. We should follow him in his earnestness in seeking his own salvation. He was not careless and indifferent in this matter; but the kingdom of heaven suffered violence from him. He did not halt between two opinions, or seek with a wavering, unsteady mind, but with the most full determination and strong resolution. He resolved, if it could by any means be possible, that he would attain to the resurrection of the dead. He does not say that he was determined to attain it, if he could, by means

that were not very costly or difficult, or by laboring for it a little time, or only now and them, or without any great degree of suffering, or without great loss in his temporal interest. But if by *any* means he could do it, he would, let the means be easy or difficult. Let it be a short labor and trial, or a long one; let the cross be light or heavy; it was all one to his resolution. Let the requisite means be what they would, if it were possible, he would obtain it. He did not hesitate at worldly losses, for he tells us that he readily suffered the loss of all things, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, and in his righteousness. Phil. 3:8, 9. It was not with him as it was with the young man, that came kneeling to Christ to inquire of him what he should do to inherit eternal life, and when Christ said, Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, he went away sorrowful. He was not willing to part with all. If Christ had bid him sell half, it may be he would have complied with it. He had a great desire to secure salvation. But the apostle Paul did not content himself with wishing. He was resolved, if it were possible, that he would obtain it. And when it was needful that he should lose worldly good, or when any great suffering was in his way, it was no cause of hesitation to him. He had been in very comfortable and honorable circumstances among the Jews. He had received the best education that was to be had among them, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was regarded as a very learned young man. His own nation, the Jews, had a high esteem of him, and he was esteemed for his moral and religious qualifications among them. But when he could not hold the outward benefit of these things and win Christ, he despised them totally, he parted with all his credit and honor. He made nothing of them, that he might win Christ. And instead of being honored and loved, and living in credit, as before among his own nation, he made himself the object of their universal hatred. He lost all, and the Jews hated him, and persecuted him everywhere. And when great sufferings were in the way, he willingly made himself conformable to Christ's death, that he might have a part in his resurrection. He parted with his honor, his ease, his former friends and former acquaintance, his worldly goods and everything else, and plunged himself into a state of extreme labor, contempt, and suffering. And in this way he sought the kingdom of heaven. He acted in this matter very much as one that is running a race for some great prize, who makes running his great and only business, till he has reached the end of the race, and strains every

nerve and sinew, and suffers nothing to divert him, and will not stand to listen to what anyone says to him, but presses forward. Or as a man that is engaged in battle, sword in hand, with strong and violent enemies, that seek his life, who exerts himself to his utmost, as for his life. 1 Cor. 9:26, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." When fleshly appetites stood in the way, however importunate they were, he utterly denied them and renounced them. They were no impediment in the way of his thorough pursuit of salvation. He would not be subject to the appetites of his body, but made them subject to his soul. 1 Cor. 9:27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Probably there never was a soldier, when he bore his part in storming a city, that acted with greater resolution and violence, as it were forcing his way through all that opposed him, than the apostle Paul in seeking the kingdom of heaven. We have not only his own word for it; the history we have of his life, written by St. Luke, shows the same. Now those who seek their salvation ought to follow this example. Persons who are concerned for their salvation, sometimes inquire what they shall do. Let them do as did the apostle Paul, seek salvation in the way he did, with the like violence and resolution. Those that make this inquiry, who are somewhat anxious year after year, and complain that they have not obtained any comfort, would do well to ask themselves whether they seek salvation in any measure in this way, with that resolution and violence of which he set them an example. Alas, are they not very far indeed from it? Can it in any proper sense be said, that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence at their hands?

2. The apostle did not only thus earnestly seek salvation before his conversion and hope, but afterwards also. What he says in the 3rd chapter of Philippians (Phil. 3) of his suffering the loss of all things, that he might be found in Christ, and its being the one thing that he did to seek salvation. And also what he says of his so running as not in vain, but as resolving to win the prize of salvation, and keeping under his body that he might not be a castaway were long after his conviction, and after he had renounced all hope of his own good estate by nature. If being a convinced sinner excuses a man from seeking salvation any more, or makes it reasonable that he should cease his earnest care and labor for it, certainly the apostle might have been excused, when he had not only

already attained true grace, but such eminent degrees of it. To see one of the most eminent saints that ever lived, if not the most eminent of all, so exceedingly engaged in seeking his own salvation, ought forever to put to shame those who are a thousand degrees below him, and are but mere infants to him, if they have any grace at all, who yet excuse themselves from using any violence after the kingdom of heaven now because they have attained already, who free themselves from the burden of going on earnestly to seek salvation with this, that they have finished the work, they have obtained a hope. The apostle, as eminent as he was, did not say within himself, "I am converted, and so am sure of salvation. Christ has promised it me. Why need I labor any more to secure it? Yea, I am not only converted, but I have obtained great degrees of grace." But still he is violent after salvation. He did not keep looking back on the extraordinary discoveries he enjoyed at his first conversion, and the past great experience he had had from time to time. He did not content himself with the thought that he possessed the most wonderful testimonies of God's favor, and of the love of Christ, already, that ever any enjoyed, even to his being caught up to the third heavens. But he forgot the things that were behind. He acted as though he did not consider that he had yet attained an interest in Christ. Phil. 3:11, 12, 13, 14, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostle still sought that he might win Christ and his righteousness, and attain to his resurrection, not as though he had attained it already, or had already obtained a title to the crown. And this is especially the thing in which he calls on us to imitate his example in the text. It was not because Paul was at a loss whether he was truly converted or not, that he was still so earnest in seeking salvation. He not only thought that he was converted, and should go to heaven when he died, but he knew and spoke particularly about it in this very epistle, in the twenty-first verse of the first chapter (Phil. 1:21), "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." And in the foregoing verse he says, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but

that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." The apostle knew that though he was converted, yet there remained a great work that he must do in order to his salvation. There was a narrow way to eternal glory, through which he must pass, and never could come to heaven in any other way. He knew it was absolutely necessary for him earnestly to seek salvation still. He knew there was no going to heaven in a slothful way. And therefore he did not seek salvation the less earnestly, for his having hope and assurance, but a great deal more. We nowhere read so much of his earnestness and violence for the kingdom of heaven before he was converted, as afterwards. The apostle's hope was not of a nature to make him slothful. It had a contrary effect. The assurance he had of victory, together with the necessity there was of fighting, engaged him to fight not as one that beat the air, but as one that wrestled with principalities and powers. Now this example the apostle does especially insist in the text that we ought to follow. And this should induce all present who think themselves converted, to inquire whether they seek salvation never the less earnestly, because they think it is well with them, and that they are now sure of heaven. Most certainly if the apostle was in the right way of acting, we in this place are generally in the wrong. For nothing is more apparent than that it is not thus with the generality of professors here, but that it is a common thing after they think they are safe, to be far less diligent and earnest in religion than before.

3.The apostle did not only diligently seek heaven after he knew he was converted, but was earnestly cautious lest he should be damned, as appears by the passage already cited. "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Here you see the apostle is very careful lest he should be a castaway, and denies his carnal appetites, and mortifies his flesh, for that reason. He did not say, "I am safe, I am sure I shall never be lost; why need I take any further care respecting it?" Many think because they suppose themselves converted, and so safe, that they have nothing to do with the awful threatenings of God's Word, and those terrible denunciations of damnation that are contained in it. When they hear them, they hear them as things which belong only to others, and not at all to themselves, as though there were no application of what is

revealed in the Scripture respecting hell, to the godly. And therefore, when they hear awakening sermons about the awful things that God has threatened to the wicked, they do not hear them for themselves, but only for others. But it was not thus with this holy apostle, who certainly was as safe from hell, and as far from a damnable state, as any of us. He looked upon himself as still nearly concerned in God's threatenings of eternal damnation, notwithstanding all his hope, and all his eminent holiness, and therefore gave great diligence, that he might avoid eternal damnation. For he considered that eternal misery was as certainly connected with a wicked life as ever it was, and that it was absolutely necessary that he should still keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, in order that he might not be damned, because indulging the lusts of the body and being damned were more surely connected together. The apostle knew that this conditional proposition was true concerning him, as ever it was. "If I live wickedly, or do not live in a way of universal obedience to God's commands, I shall certainly be a castaway." This is evident because the apostle mentions a proposition of this nature concerning himself in that very chapter where he says, he kept under his body lest he should be a castaway. 1 Cor. 9:16, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." What necessity was there upon the apostle to preach the gospel, though God had commanded him, for he was already converted, and was safe. And if he had neglected to preach the gospel, how could he have perished after he was converted? But yet this conditional proposition was still true. If he did not live a life of obedience to God, woe would be to him; woe to him, if he did not preach the gospel. The connection still held. It is impossible a man should go anywhere else than to hell in a way of disobedience to God. And therefore he deemed it necessary for him to preach the gospel on that account, and on the same account he deemed it necessary to keep under his body, lest he should be a castaway. The connection between a wicked life and damnation is so certain, that if a man lives a wicked life, it proves that all his supposed experiences are nothing. If a man at the last day be found a worker of iniquity, nothing else will be inquired of about him. Let him pretend what he will, Christ will say to him and all others like him, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye that work iniquity." And God has revealed these threatenings and this connection, not only to deter wicked

men, but also godly men, from sin. And though God will keep men that are converted from damnation, yet this is the means by which he will keep them from it; *viz.* he will keep them from a wicked life. And though he will keep them from a wicked life, yet this is one means by which he will keep them from it, *viz.* by their own caution to avoid damnation, and by his threatenings of damnation if they should live a wicked life. We have another remarkable instance in Job, who was an eminently holy man, yet avoided sin with the utmost care, because he would avoid destruction from God. Job 31. Surely we have as much cause to be cautious, that we do not expose ourselves to destruction from God, as holy Job had. We have not a greater stock of goodness than he. The apostle directs Christians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2:12. And it is spoken of as the character of a true saint, that he trembles at God's Word; Isa. 66:2, which is to tremble especially at the awful threatenings of it, as Job did. Whereas the manner of many now is, whenever they think they are converted, to throw by those threatenings of God's Word, as if they had no more to do with them, because the suppose they are converted, and out of danger. Christ gave his disciples, even those of them that were converted, as well as others, directions to strive for salvation because broad was the way that leads to destruction, and men are so apt to walk in that way and be damned. Mat. 7:13, 14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

4. The apostle did not seek salvation by his own righteousness. Though his sufferings were so very great, his labors so exceedingly abundant, yet he never accounted them as righteousness. He trod it under his feet, as utterly insufficient to recommend him to God. He gave diligence that he might be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, which is of God, through faith, as in the foregoing part of the chapter from which the text is taken, beginning with the fourth verse (Phil. 3:4), "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church;

touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

5.. In those earnest labors which he performed, he had respect to the recompense of the reward. He did it for an incorruptible crown. 1 Cor 9:25. He sought a high degree of glory, for he knew the more he labored the more he should be rewarded, as appears from what he tells the Corinthians. "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." And 1 Cor. 3:8, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." That he had respect to that crown of glory, which is Master had promised, in those great labors and sufferings, is evident from what he says to Timothy, a little before his death. 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." All Christians should follow his example in this also. They should not content themselves with the thought that they have goodness enough to carry them to heaven, but should earnestly seek high degrees of glory. For the higher degrees of glory are promised to extraordinary labors for God, for no other reason, but that we should seek them.

Second, I proceed to mention some of the virtues of Paul, that more immediately respect God and Christ, in which we ought to follow his example.

1. He was strong in faith. It may be truly said of him that he lived by faith. His faith seemed to be even without the least appearance of diffidence or doubt in his words or actions, but all seemed to proclaim, that he had God and Christ and the invisible world continually in view. Such a faith, that was in continual exercise in him, he professes in 2 Cor. 5:6, 7, 8, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." He always speaks of God and Christ and things invisible and future, as if he certainly knew them, and then saw them as fully and certainly as we see anything that is immediately before our bodily eyes. He spoke as though he certainly knew that God's promise of eternal life should be accomplished, and gives this as the reason why he labored so abundantly, and endured all manner of temporal sufferings and death, and was always delivered unto death for Christ's sake. 2 Cor. 4:11, etc. "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." He speaks of his earnest expectation and hope of the fulfillment of God's promises. And a little before his death, when he was a prisoner, and when he knew that he was like to bear the trial of martyrdom, which is the greatest trial of faith, he expresses his faith in Christ in the strongest terms. 2 Tim. 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Such an example may well make us ashamed; for how weak and unsteady is the faith of most Christians! If now and then there seems to be a lively exercise of faith, giving the person at that time a firm persuasion and confidence; yet how short are such exercises, how soon do they vanish! How often is faith shaken with one temptation. How often are the exercises of it interrupted with doubting, and how much is exhibited of a diffident, vibrating spirit! How little does our faith accomplish in times of trial. How often and how easily is our confidence in God shaken and interrupted, and how frequently does unbelief prevail! This is much to the dishonor of our Savior Jesus Christ, as well as very painful to us. What a happy and glorious lot it is to live such a life of faith, as Paul lived! How far did he soar on the wings of his strong faith above those little difficulties, that continually molest us, and are ready to

overcome us! Seeing we have such a blessed example set before us in the Scriptures, let it prompt us earnestly to seek, that we may soar higher also.

2. Another virtue in which we should follow his example is his great love to Christ. The Corinthians, who saw how the apostle acted, how he labored, and how he suffered, and could see no worldly motive, were astonished. They wondered what it was that so wonderfully influenced and actuated the man. The apostle says that he was a spectacle to the world. But this was the immediate principle that moved him: His strong, his intense love to his glorious Lord and Master. This love constrained him, that he could do nothing else than strive and labor and seek for his salvation. This account he gives of it himself. 2 Cor. 5:14, "The love of Christ constraineth us." He had such a delight in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the knowledge and contemplation of him, that he tells us, he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." He speaks in very positive terms. He does not say merely that he hopes he loves Christ, so as to despise other things in comparison of the knowledge of him. But "yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." And he assigns this reason why he even gloried in his sufferings for Christ's sake, because the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost. Rom. 5:5. This expression seems to imply that he sensibly felt that holy affection, sweetly and powerfully diffused in his soul, like some precious, fragrant ointment. And how does he triumph in his love to Christ in the midst of his sufferings! Rom. 8:35, 36, 37, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us." May not this make us ashamed of our cold, dead hearts that we hear so often of Christ, and of his glorious excellencies and his wonderful love, with so little emotion, our hearts, being very commonly frozen up like a clod of earth by worldly affections. And it may be that now and then with much difficulty we persuade ourselves to do a little or expend a little for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. And then are ready to boast of it, that we have done so nobly. Such superior examples as we have are

enough to make us forever blush for our own attainments in the love of Christ, and rouse us earnestly to follow after those who have gone so far beyond us.

3. The apostle lived in a day when Christianity was greatly despised. Yet he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Christians were everywhere despised by the great men of the world. Almost all those that made any figure in the world, men in honorable stations, men of learning, and men of wealth, despised Christianity, and accounted it a mean, contemptible thing to be a Christian, a follower and worshipper of a poor, crucified man. To be a Christian was regarded as what ruined a man's reputation. Christians were everywhere looked upon as fools, and were derided and mocked. They were the meanest of mankind, the offscouring of the world. This was a great temptation to Christians to be ashamed of the gospel. And the apostle Paul was more especially in such circumstances, as exposed him to this temptation. For before he was a Christian, he was in great reputation among his own countrymen. He was esteemed a young man of more than ordinary proficiency in learning, and was a man of high distinction among the Pharisees, a class of men of the first standing among the Jews. In times when religion is much despised, great men are more ready to be ashamed of it than others. Many of the great seem to think that to appear religious men would make them look little. They do not know how to comply with showing a devout spirit, a spirit of supreme love to God, and a strict regard to God's commands. But yet the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ anywhere, or before any person. He was not ashamed of it among his own countrymen, the Jews, before their rulers, and scribes, and great men, but ever boldly professed it, and confronted them in their opposition. When he was at Athens, the chief seat of learning and of learned men in the world, though the learned men and philosophers there despised his doctrine, and called him a babbler for preaching the gospel. Yet he felt no shame, but boldly disputed with and confounded those great philosophers, and converted some of them. And when he came to Rome, the metropolis and mistress of the world, where resided the emperor, and senators, and the chief rulers of the world, he was not ashamed of the gospel there. He tells the Romans; "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation

to every one that believeth." The apostle was greatly derided and despised for preaching a crucified Jesus. 1 Cor. 4:13, "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." And in the tenth verse he says, "We are fools for Christ's sake." They were where every accounted and called fools. Yet the apostle was so far from being ashamed of the crucified Jesus, that he gloried in him above all things. Gal. 6:14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is an example for us to follow, if at any time we fall in among those who hold religion in contempt, and will despise us for our pretensions to religion, and will be ready to deride us for being so precise, and look upon us as fools; that we may not be ashamed of religion, and yield to sinful compliances with vain and loose persons, lest we should appear singular, and be looked upon as ridiculous. Such a meanness of spirit possesses many persons who are not worthy to be called Christians; and are such as Christ will be ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

4. Another virtue in which we ought to follow the apostle was his contempt of the world, and his heavenly-mindedness. He contemned all the vain enjoyments of the world. He despised it riches. Acts. 20:33, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." He despised the pleasures of the world. "I keep under my body." The apostle's pleasures were in the sufferings of his body, instead of the gratification of its carnal appetites. 2 Cor. 12:10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." He despised the honors of the world. 1 Thes. 2:6, "Nor of men sought we glory; neither of you, nor yet of others." He declares that the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. These were not the things that the apostle sought, but the things that were above, that were out of sight to other men. 2 Cor. 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." He longed greatly after heaven. 2 Cor. 5:4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life." And he tells us that he knew no man after the flesh. That is, he did not look upon the men or things of this world, or regard them as related to the world, or as they respected the present life. But he considered all men and all things as they had

relation to a spiritual nature, and to another world. In this the apostle acted as becomes a Christian. For Christians, those that are indeed so, are people that belong not to this world, and therefore, it is very unbecoming in them to have their minds taken up about these things. The example of Paul may make all such persons ashamed, who have their minds chiefly occupied about the things of the world, about gaining estates, or acquiring honors. And yet would be accounted fellow-disciples with the apostle, partakers of the same labors, and fellow-heirs of the same heavenly inheritance. And it should prompt us to strive for more indifference to the world, and for more heavenly-mindedness.

5. We ought also to follow the example of the apostle in his abounding in prayer and praise. He was very earnest, and greatly engaged in those duties, and continued in them, as appears from many passages. Rom. 1:8, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." Eph. 1:15, 16, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Col. 1:3, "We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." 1 Thes. 1:2, 3, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." And 1 Thes. 3:9, 10, "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" 2 Tim. 1:3, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day."

6. We ought to follow him in his contentment under the allotments of Divine Providence. He was the subject of a vast variety of dispensations of Providence. He went through a great many changes, and was almost continually in suffering circumstances, sometimes in one respect, sometimes in another, and sometimes the subject of a great many kinds

of suffering together. But yet he had attained to such a degree of submission to the will of God, as to be contented in every condition, and under all dispensations towards him. Phil. 4:11, 12, 13, “Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” What a blessed temper and disposition of mind was this to which Paul had arrived. And how happy is that man of whom it can now be said with truth! He is, as it were, out the reach of every evil. Nothing can touch him so as to disturb his rest, for he rests in everything that God orders.

7. We should follow the apostle in his great caution in giving an account of his experience, not to represent more of himself in his words, than men should see in his deeds. In 2 Corinthians he gives somewhat of an account how he had been favored with visions and revelations, and had been caught up to the third heavens. And in the sixth verse (2 Cor. 12:6), intimating that he could relate more, he breaks off, and forbears to say anything further respecting his experience. And he gives this reason for it; *viz*. that he would avoid, in what he relates of himself, giving occasion for anyone to be disappointed in him, in expecting more from him, by his own account of his experience and revelations, than he should see or hear of him in his conversation. His words are, “for though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth; but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be; or that he heareth of me.” Some may wonder at this in such a man as the apostle, and may say, Why should a man so eminent in his conversation, be so cautious in this matter? Why need he be afraid to declare all the extraordinary things that he had witnessed, since his life was so agreeable, so eminently answerable to his experience? But yet you see the apostle forbore upon this very account. He knew there was great need of caution in this matter. He knew that if in giving an account of his extraordinary revelations, he should give rise to an expectation of too great things in his conversation, and should not live answerably to that expectation, it would greatly wound religion. He knew that its enemies would be ready to say presently, “Who is this? The man that gives so

extraordinary an account of his visions and revelations, and peculiar tokens of God's favor to him, does he live no more conformably to it?" But if such a man as the apostle, so eminent in his life, was so cautious in this respect; surely we have need to be cautious, who fail so much more in our example than he did, and in whose conversation the enemy may find so much more occasion to speak reproachfully of religion. This teaches us that it would be better to refrain wholly from boasting of our experience than to represent ourselves as better than our deeds and conversation represent us. For men will compare one with the other. And if they do not see a correspondence between them, this will be much more to the dishonor of God than our account will be to his honor. Let Christians, therefore, be warned to be ever cautious in this respect, after the great example of the apostle.

Third, I shall mention some of those virtues of the apostle that more immediately respected men, in which we ought to follow his example.

1. His meekness under abuses and his love to his enemies. There were multitudes that hated him, but there is no appearance of his hating any. The greater part of the world where he went were his enemies. But he was the friend of everyone and labored and prayed earnestly for the good of all. And when he was reproached and derided and buffeted, still it was with meekness and gentleness of spirit that he bore all, and wished well to them none the less, and sought their good. 1 Cor. 4:12, 13, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." In that period of his great sufferings when he went up to Jerusalem, and there was such an uproar about him, and the people were in so furious a rage against him, eagerly thirsting for his blood; he discovered no anger or ill will towards his persecutors. At that time when he was a prisoner through their malice, and stood before king Agrippa, and Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and his blood-thirsty enemies were standing by; he replied, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He wished that his accusers, and those who had bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him, had all of them as great privileges and as much of the favor of heaven as himself. And that they

were altogether as he was, except his bonds and imprisonment, and those afflictions which they had brought upon him. He did not desire that they should be like him in that affliction, though it was the fruit of their own cruelty. And when some of the Corinthians, whom he had instructed and converted from heathenism, had dealt ill by him, had hearkened to some false teachers, that had been among them, who hated and reproached the apostle, he tells them, in 2 Cor. 12:15, notwithstanding these abuses, that still he would very gladly spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he should be loved by them. If they returned him no thanks for his love, but only ill will and ill treatment, still he stood ready to spend and be spent for them. And though the apostle was so hated, and had suffered so many abuses from the unbelieving Jews, yet how does he express his love to them? He prayed earnestly for them. Rom. 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." And he went mourning for them. He went about with a heavy heart, and with continual grief and sorrow, from compassion for them, under the calamities of which they were the subjects. And he declares in the most solemn manner, that he had so great desire for their salvation, that he could find it in his heart to wish himself accursed from Christ for them, and to be offered up a sacrifice, if that might be a means of their salvation. Rom. 9:1, 2, 3. We are to understand it of a temporal curse. He could be willing to die an accursed death, and so be made a curse for a time, as Christ was, if that might be a means of salvation to them. How are those reproved by this, who, when they are abused and suffer reproach or injury, have thereby indulged a spirit of hatred against their neighbor, a prejudice whereby they are always apt to entertain a distrust, and to seek and embrace opportunities against them, and to be sorry for their prosperity, and glad at their disappointments.

2. He delighted in peace. When any contention happened among Christians, he was exceedingly grieved by it. As when he heard of the contentions that broke out in the Corinthian church. He intimates to the Philippians, how he should rejoice at their living in love and peace, and therefore earnestly entreats them that they should so live. Phil. 2:1, 2, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, the ye

be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." And he studied those things that should make for peace. To that end he yielded to everyone as much as possible in those things that were lawful, and complied with the weakness and humors of others oftentimes, for the sake of peace. He declares that though he was free from all men, yet he had made himself servant of all. To the Jews he became as a Jew; to them that were under the law, as under the law; to them that were without law, as without law; to the weak he became as weak. He rather chose to please others than himself, for the sake of peace, and the good of their souls. 1 Cor. 10:33, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

3. He was of a most tender compassionate spirit towards any that were in affliction. He showed such a spirit especially in the case of the incestuous Corinthian. The crime was very great, and the fault of the church was great in suffering such wickedness among them, and this occasioned the apostle to write with some sharpness to them respecting it. But when the apostle perceived that his reproof was laid to heart by the Corinthian Christians, and that they repented and their hearts were filled with sorrow, though he rejoiced at it, yet he was so affected with their sorrow, that his heart yearned towards them, and he was almost ready to repent that he had written so severely to them. He was full of concern about it, lest his former letter should have filled them with overmuch sorrow. "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent; for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season." So he had compassion for the incestuous man, though he had been guilty of so file a crime, and was greatly concerned that he should be comforted. Whenever any Christian suffered or was hurt, the apostle says he felt it and suffered himself. 2 Cor. 11:29, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"

4. He rejoiced at others' prosperity and joy. When he saw the soul of anyone comforted, the apostle was a sharer with him. His soul was comforted also. When he saw any Christian refreshed in his spirit, his own spirit was refreshed. 2 Cor. 7:6, 7, "Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he

was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me, so that I rejoiced the more." "Therefore we were comforted in your comfort; yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all."

5. He delighted in the fellowship of God's people. He longed after them when absent. Phil. 1:8, "For God is my record how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Christ." And also, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown." So Rom. 1:11, 12, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

6. He was truly courteous in his behavior towards others. Though he was so great a man, and had so much honor put upon him of God, yet he was full of courtesy towards all men, rendering to all suitable respect. Thus when he was called before Jewish or heathen magistrates, he treated them with the honor and respect due to their places. When the Jews took him in the temple, though they behaved themselves more like devils than men, yet he addressed them in terms of high respect, "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence:" calling the common Jews his *brethren*, and saluting the elders and scribes with the title of *fathers*, though they were a body of infidels. So when he pleads his cause before Festus, a heathen governor, he gives him the title that belonged to him in his station; calling him, "Most noble Festus." His courtesy also appears in his salutations in his epistles. He is particularly careful to mention many persons, directing that his salutations should be given to them. Such a degree of courtesy, in so great a person as this apostle, reproves all those professing Christians, who, though far below him, are not courteous and respectful in their behavior to their neighbors, and especially to their superiors. Incivility is here reproved, and the too common neglect of Christians is reproved, who do not take strict care, that their children are taught good manners, and politeness, and brought up in a respectful and courteous behavior towards others.

Fourth, I shall mention those virtues of the apostle that respected both God and men, in which we should imitate his example.

1. He was a man of a most public spirit. He was greatly concerned for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, and the good of his church. We see a great many men wholly engaged in pursuit of their worldly interests. Many who are earnest in the pursuit of the carnal pleasures, many who are eager in the pursuit of honors, and many who are violent in the pursuit of gain. But we probably never saw any man more engaged to advance his estate, nor more taken up with his pleasures, nor more greedy of honor, than the apostle Paul was about the flourishing of Christ's kingdom, and the good of the souls of men. The things that grieve other men are outward crosses: losses in estates, or falling under contempt, or bodily sufferings. But these things grieved not him. He made little account of them. The things that grieved him were those that hurt the interests of religion. And about those his tears were shed. Thus he was exceedingly grieved, and wept greatly, for the corruptions that had crept into the church of Corinth, which was the occasion of his writing his first epistle to them. 2 Cor. 2:4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you, with many tears." The things about which other men are jealous, are their worldly advantages and pleasures. If these are threatened, their jealously is excited, since they are above all things, dear to them. But the things that kindled the apostle's jealousy, were those that seemed to threaten the interests of religion, and the good of the church: 2 Cor. 11:2, 3, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The things at which other men rejoice are their amassing earthly treasures, their being advanced to honors, their being possessed of outward pleasures and delights. But these excited not the apostle's joy; but when he saw or heard of anything by which the interests of religion were promoted, and the church of Christ prospered, then he rejoiced: 1 Thes. 1:3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." And chapter 2:20, "Ye are our glory and joy." He rejoiced at those things, however dear they cost him, how much soever he lost by them in his temporal interest, if the welfare of religion and the good of souls were promoted. Phil. 2:16, 17, "Holding forth the word of

life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." He rejoiced at the steadfastness of saints: Col. 2:5, "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." And he rejoiced at the conviction of sinners, and in whatever tended to it. He rejoiced at any good which was done, though by others, and though it was done accidentally by his enemies. Phil. 1:15, 16, 17, 18, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." When the apostle heard anything of this nature, it was good news to him: 1 Thes. 3:6, 7, "But now, when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also you; therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith." When he heard such tidings, his heart was wont to be enlarged in the praises of God: Col. 1:3, 4, "We give thanks to God and the Father or our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." He was not only wont to praise God when he first heard such tidings, but as often as he thought of such things, they were so joyful to him, that he readily praised God. Phil. 1:3, 4, 5, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." Let us compare ourselves with such an example, and examine how far we are of such spirit. Let those on this occasion reflect upon themselves, whose hearts are chiefly engaged in their own private temporal concerns, and are not much concerned respecting the interests of religion and the church of Christ, if they can obtain their private aims; who are greatly grieved when things go contrary to their worldly prosperity, who see religion, as it were, weltering in its blood, without much sorrow of heart. It may be, that they will say; It is greatly to be lamented that there is such declension, and it is a sorrowful thing that sin

so much prevails. But if we would look into their hearts, how cold and careless should we see them. Those words are words of course. They express themselves thus chiefly, because they think it creditable to lament the decay of religion. But they are ten times as much concerned about other things as these, about their own private interest, or some secular affairs of the town. If anything seems to threaten their being disappointed in these things, how readily are they excited and alarmed. But how quiet and easy in their spirit, notwithstanding all the dark clouds that appear over the cause and kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of those around them! How quick and how high is their zeal against those, who, they think, unjustly oppose them in their temporal interests. But how low is their zeal, comparatively, against those things that are exceedingly pernicious of the interests of religion! If their own credit is touched, how are they awakened! But they can see the credit of religion wounded, and bleeding, and dying, with little hearty concern. Most men are of a private, narrow spirit. They are not of the spirit of the apostle Paul, nor of the psalmist, who preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy. Psa. 137:6.

2. We ought to follow the apostle in his diligent and laborious endeavors to do good. We see multitudes incessantly laboring and striving after the world. But not more than the apostle labored to advance the kingdom of his dear Master and the good of his fellow-creatures. His work was very great, and attended with great difficulties and opposition. And his labor was answerably great. He labored abundantly more than any of the apostles: 1 Cor. 15:10, “I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” How great were the pains he took in preaching and in traveling from place to place over so great part of the world, by sea and land, and probably for the most part on foot, when he traveled by land: instructing and converting the heathen, disputing with gainsayers, and heathen Jews, and heretics, strenuously opposing and fighting against the enemies of the church of Christ, wrestling not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high placed; acting the part of a good soldier, as one that goes a warfare, putting on Christ and using the whole armor of God, laboring to establish and confirm and build up the saints, reclaiming those that were wandering, delivering those that were ensnared,

enlightening the dark, comforting the disconsolate, and succoring the tempted, rectifying disorders that had happened in churches, exercising ecclesiastical discipline towards offenders, and admonishing the saints of the covenant of grace, opening and applying the Scriptures, ordaining persons and giving them directions, and assisting those that were ordained, and writing epistles, and sending messengers to one and another part of the church of Christ! He had the care of the churches lying continually upon him. 2 Cor. 11:28, "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." These things occasioned him to be continually engaged in earnest labor. He continued in it night and day, sometimes almost the whole night, preaching and admonishing, as appears by Acts 20:7,11, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed." And he did all freely, without any view to any temporal gain. He tells the Corinthians that he would gladly spend and be spent for them. Besides his laboring in the work of the gospel, he labored very much, yea, sometimes night and day, in a handicraft trade to procure subsistence, that he might not be chargeable to others, and so hinder the gospel of Christ: 1 Thes. 2:9, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail, for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." And he continued this course of labor as long as he lived. He never was weary in well-doing; and though he met with continual opposition, and thousands of difficulties, yet nothing discouraged him. But he kept on, pressing forward in this course of hard, constant labor to the end of his life, as appears by what he says just before his death, 2 Tim. 4:6, 7, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And the effects and fruits of the apostle's labors witnessed for him. The world was blessed by the good he did; not one nation only, but multitudes of nations. The effects of his labors were so great in so many nations before he had labored twenty years that the heathens called it his turning the world upside down. Acts 27:6. This very man was the chief instrument in that great work of God, the calling of the Gentiles, and the conversion of

the Roman world. And he seems to have done more good, far more good, than any other man ever did from the beginning of the world to this day. He lived after his conversion not much more than thirty years. And in those thirty years he did more than a thousand men commonly do in an age. This example may well make us reflect upon ourselves, and consider how little we do for Christ, and for our fellow-creatures. We profess to be Christians as well as the apostle Paul, and Christ is worthy that we should serve him as Paul did. But how small are our labors for God and Christ and our fellow creatures! Though many of us keep ourselves busy, how are our labor and strength spent, and with what is our time filled up? Let us consider ourselves a little, and the manner of spending our time. We labor to provide for ourselves and families, to maintain ourselves in credit, and to make our part good among men. But is that all for which we are sent into the world? Did he who made us and gave us our powers of mind and strength of body, and who gives us our time and our talents, give them to us chiefly to be spent in this manner; or in serving him? Many years have rolled over the heads of some of us, and what have we lived for? What have we been doing all this time? How much is the world the better for us? Were we here only to eat and to drink, and to devour the good which the earth produces? Many of the blessings of Providence have been conferred upon us. And where is the good that we have done in return? If we had never been born, or if we had died in infancy, of how much good would the world have been deprived of? Such reflections should be made with concern, by those who pretend to be Christians. For certainly God does not plant vines in his vineyard, except for the fruit which he expects they should bring forth. He does not hire laborers into his vineyard, but to do service. They who live only for themselves, live in vain, and shall at last be cut down as cumberers of the earth. Let the example of Paul make us more diligent to do good for the time to come. Men that do but little good are very ready to excuse themselves, and to say that God has not succeeded their endeavors. But is it any wonder that we have not been succeeded, when we have been no more engaged? When God sees any person thoroughly and earnestly engaged, continuing in it, and really faithful, he is wont to succeed them in some good measure. You see how wonderfully he succeeded the great labors of the apostle.

3. He did not only encounter great labors, but he exercised also his utmost skill and contrivance for the glory of God, and the good of his fellow-creatures. 2 Cor. 12:16, “Being crafty, I caught you with guile.” How do the men of the world not only willingly labor to obtain worldly good, but how much craft and subtlety do they use? And let us consider how it is here among ourselves. How many are our contrivances to secure and advance our own worldly concerns! Who can reckon up the number of all the schemes that have been formed among us, to gain money, and honors, and accomplish particular worldly designs? How subtle are we to avoid those things that might hurt us in our worldly interest, and to baffle the designs of those who may be endeavoring to hurt us! But how little is contrived for the advancement of religion, and the good of our neighbors! How many schemes are laid by men to promote their worldly designs, where one is laid for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the good of men! How frequent are the meetings of neighbors to determine how they may best advance such and such worldly affairs! But how seldom are there such meetings to revive sinking religion, to maintain and advance the credit of the gospel, and to accomplish charitable designs for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, and the comfort and well-being of mankind! May not these considerations justly be a source of lamentation? How many men are wise in promoting their worldly interests. But what a shame is it that so few show themselves wise as serpents and harmless as doves for Christ! And how commonly is it the reverse of what the apostle advises the Christian Romans, “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” Is it not often on the contrary with professing Christians, as it was with the people of Judah and Jerusalem. “They are wise to do evil, but to do good, they have no knowledge?”

4. The apostle Paul did willingly forego those thing that were in themselves lawful, for the furtherance of the interests of religion and the good of men. Thus marriage was a thing lawful for the apostle Paul as well as for other men, as he himself asserts. But he did not use the liberty he had in this matter because he thought he might be under greater advantages to spread the gospel in a single than a married state. So it was lawful for the apostle to take the other course of life, as in eating and drinking, and freely using all kinds of wholesome food. And it was in

itself a lawful thing for the apostle to demand a maintenance of those to whom he preached. But he forbore those things because he supposed that in his circumstances, and in the circumstances of the church of Christ in that day, he could more advance the interests of religion and the good of men without them. For the gospel's sake, and for the good of men, he was willing to forego all the outward advantages he could derive from them. 1 Cor. 8:13, "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." He would not only avoid those things that were useless in themselves, but those also that gave any occasion to sin, or which led or exposed either himself or others to sin. Then it follows in the next chapter, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" The apostle did not only forbear some little things, but he put himself to great difficulties by forbearing those thing that were in themselves lawful. It cost him a great deal of labor of body to maintain himself. But yet he willingly labored, working with his own hands. And as he says, though he was free from all men, yet he made himself the servant of all, that he might gain the more. Let this induce such persons to consider themselves, whether they act altogether as become Christians, who look upon it as a sufficient excuse for all the liberties they take, that the things in which they allow themselves, are in themselves lawful, that they are nowhere forbidden, though they cannot deny but that considered in their circumstances, they are not of ill tendency, and expose them to temptation, and really tend to wound the credit and interest of religion, and to be a stumbling-block to others, or as the apostle expresses it, tend to cause others to offend. But they uphold themselves with this, that the things which they practice are not absolutely unlawful in themselves, and therefore they will not hearken to any counsels to avoid them. They think with themselves that it is unreasonable they should be tied up so strictly, that they may not take one and another liberty, and must be so stiff and precise above others. But why did not the apostle talk after their manner? Why did not he say

within himself, It is unreasonable that I should deny myself lawful meat and drink merely to comply with the consciences of a few weak persons, that are unreasonable in their scruples? Why should I deny myself the comforts of marriage? Why should I deny myself that maintenance which Christ himself has ordained for ministers, only to avoid the objection of unreasonable men? But the apostle was of another spirit. What he aimed at was by any means to promote the interest of religion and the good of the church. And he had rather forego all the common comforts and enjoyments of life than that religion should suffer.

5. The apostle willingly endured innumerable and extreme sufferings for the honor of Christ and the good of men. His sufferings were very great; and that not only once or twice, but he went through a long series of sufferings, that continued from the time of his conversion as long as his life lasted. So that his life was not only a life of extraordinary labor, but a life of extreme sufferings also. Labors and sufferings were mixed together, and attended each other to the end of the race which he ran. He endured sufferings of all kinds, even those that cannot consist in the loss of temporal things. He tells us that he had suffered the loss of all things, Phil. 3:8, all his former enjoyments, which he had before his conversion. And he endured many kinds of positive afflictions. 1 Cor. 4:11, 12, “Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.” 2 Cor. 6:4-11, “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” None of the apostles went through so great and such various afflictions as he. 2 Cor. 11:23-28, “Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in

deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." His sufferings were so extreme that he did not go through a series of sufferings merely, but might be said, as it were, to go through a series of deaths. He did in effect endure the pains of death over and over again almost continually, and therefore he expresses himself as he does. 2 Cor. 4:9-11, "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Rom. 8:36, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 1 Cor. 15:31, "I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." He was so pursued and pressed by troubles, sometimes outward and inward troubles together, that he had no rest. 2 Cor. 7:5, "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears." Sometimes his sufferings were so extreme that his nature seemed just ready to faint under them: 2 Cor. 1:8, "for we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." And at last the apostle was deprived of his life. He suffered a violent death at Rome under the hand of that cruel tyrant, Nero, soon after he wrote the second epistle of Timothy. These things he endured for Christ's sake, for the advancement of his kingdom, as he says, he was always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. And those he endured also from love to men, and from an earnest desire of their good. 2 Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." He knew that afflictions awaited him beforehand. But he would not avoid his duty because of such afflictions. He was so resolute in seeking Christ's glory, and the good of men, that he would pursue these objects,

notwithstanding what might befall him. Acts 20:22-24, “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Yet he went through them cheerfully and willingly, and delighted to do God’s will, and to promote others’ good, though it was at this great cost. Col. 1:24, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” And he was never weary. He did not, after he had suffered a long time, excuse himself, and say he thought he had done his part. Now here appears Christianity in its proper colors. To be of such a spirit as this, is to be of such a spirit as Christ so often requires of us, if we would be his disciples. This is to sell all and give to the poor. This is to take up the cross daily and follow Christ. To have such a spirit as this, is to have good evidence of being a Christian indeed, a thorough Christian, one that has given himself to Christ without reserve, one that hates father and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea and his own life also, one that loses his life for Christ’s sake, and so shall find it. And though it is not required of all that they should endure so great sufferings as Paul did, yet it is required and absolutely necessary, that many Christians should be in a measure of this spirit, should be of a spirit to lose all things and suffer all things for Christ, rather than not obey his commands and seek his glory. How well may our having such an example as this set before our eyes make us ashamed, who are so backward now and then to lose little things, to put ourselves a little out of our way, to deny ourselves some convenience, to deny our sinful appetites, or to incur the displeasure of a neighbor. Alas! what thought have we of Christianity, to make much of such things as these, to make so many objections, to keep back, and contrive ways to excuse ourselves, when a little difficulty arises! What kind of thoughts had we of being Christians, when we first undertook to be such, or first pretended a willingness to be Christians? Did we never sit down and count the cost, or did we cast it up at this rate, that we thought the whole sum would not amount to such little sufferings as lie in our way?

II. I now proceed to show under what special obligations we are to follow the good example of this apostle.

Beside the obligation that rests upon us to follow the good example of all, and beside the eminence of his example, there are some special reasons why we are under greater obligations to be influenced by the good example of this great apostle than by the very same example in others. This appears if we consider,

First, in general, that those whom God has especially appointed to be teachers in the Christian church, he has also set to be examples in his church. It is part of the charge that belongs to teachers, to be examples to others. It is one thing that belongs to their work and office. So this is part of the charge that the apostle gives to Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The same charge is given to Titus, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works." And this is part of the charge the apostle Peter gives to the elders and teachers of the Christian church. "The elders which are among you, I exhort; feed the flock of God. Neither being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." Thus Christ, the chief Shepherd of the sheep, whom God ordained to be the greatest teacher, he also ordained to be the greatest example to his church. And so those shepherds and teachers that are under him, according as they are appointed to be teachers, are also to be examples. They are to be guides of the flock in two ways, *viz.* by teaching and by example, as shepherds lead their flocks in two ways: partly by their voice by calling them, and partly by going before them, and by leading the way. And indeed guiding by word and guiding by example, are but two different ways of teaching; and therefore both alike belong to the office of teachers in the Christian church. But if this be so, if God has especially set those to be examples in the Christian church whom he has made its teachers, then it will follow, that wherever they have left us good examples, those examples are especially to be regarded. For God has doubtless made the duty of teachers towards the church, and the duty of the church towards her teachers, to answer one another. And therefore the charge is mutual. The charge is not only to teachers to set good examples, but the charge is to the church to regard and follow their good examples. Heb. 13:7,

“Remember them which have the rule over you, which have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” It is with respect to the good examples of the teachers of the Christian church, as it is with their words, their instructions and exhortations. We ought to hear good instructions and good counsels of anyone, let him be whom he may. But yet we are under special obligations to hearken to the good instructions and examples of those whom God has made our teachers. For that is the very office to which God has appointed them to teach and to counsel us.

Second, there are two things that are to be observed in particular of the apostle Paul which, from the foregoing general observation, will show that we are under very special obligations to regard and follow his good example.

1. God has appointed the apostle Paul not only to be a greater teacher of the Christian church in that age in which he lived, but the principal teacher of his church of any mere man in all succeeding ages. He was set of God not only to teach the church then, when he lived, but God has made him our teacher by his inspired writings. The Christian church is taught by the apostle still, and has been in every age since he lived. It is not with the penmen of the Scriptures, as it is with other teachers of the Christian church. Other teachers are made the teachers of a particular flock in the age in which they live. But the penmen of the Scriptures has God made to be the teachers of the church universal in all ages. And therefore, as particular congregations ought to follow the good examples of their pastors, so the church universal in all ages ought to observe and follow the good examples of the prophets and apostles, that are the penmen of the Scriptures, in all ages. So the apostle James commands us to take the ancient prophets for our example, because they have been appointed of God to be our teachers, and have spoken to us in the name of the Lord. Jam. 5:10, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and patience.” The prophets and apostles, in that God has made them penmen of the Scriptures, are, next to Christ, the foundation of the church of God. Eph. 2:20, “Built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” And Paul,

above all the penmen of the Scriptures, is distinguished of God as being made by him the principal teacher of the Christian church of any mere man. Moses taught gospel truths under types and shadows, whereby he did, as it were, put a veil over his face. But Paul used great plainness of speech. 2 Cor. 3:12, 13. Moses was a minister of the Old Testament and of the letter that kills. But the apostle Paul is the principal minister of the New Testament, of the spirit, and not of the letter. 2 Cor. 3:6, 7. Christ has empowered this apostle to be the penmen of more of the New Testament than any other man, and it is by him chiefly that we have the great doctrines of it explained. And God has actually made this apostle the principal founder of the Christian church under Christ, which is a great obligation on the flock to regard and follow his good example.

2. We, who are Gentiles, are especially under obligations to regard his teaching and example because it has been mainly by means of this apostle that we have been brought into the Christian church. He was the great apostle of the Gentiles, the main instrument of that great work of God, the calling of the Gentiles. It was chiefly by his means that all the countries of Europe came by the gospel. And so it was through his hands that our nation came by the gospel. They either had the gospel from him immediately, or from those who had it from him. Had it not been for the labors of this apostle, our nation might have remained to this day in gross heathenism. This consideration should especially engage us to regard him as our guide, and should endear his good example to us. The apostle often exhorts those churches, as the church of Corinth, Philippi, and others which he had converted from heathenism, and to which he had been a spiritual father, we are some of them. We have been the more remarkably converted from heathenism by this apostle, and we ought to acknowledge him as our spiritual father. And we are obliged to follow his good example as children should follow the good example of their parents.

I now proceed to a general

APPLICATION

Of the whole that has been said on this subject, which may be by way of exhortation to all earnestly to endeavor to follow the good example of this great apostle. We have heard what a spirit the apostle manifested, and

after what manner he lived in the world, how earnestly he sought his own salvation, and that not only before, but also after his conversion, and how earnestly cautious he was to avoid eternal damnation, long after he had obtained a saving interest in Christ. We have heard how strong he was in faith, how great was his love to his Lord and Savior, and how he was not ashamed of the gospel, but gloried in the cross of Christ, how he abounded in prayer and praise, how he contemned the wealth and pleasures and glory of the world, how contented he was with the allotments of Providence, how prudent and cautious he was in giving an account of his achievements, lest he should represent more of himself in words than men should see of him in deeds. We have heard how much he suffered under abuses, how he loved his enemies, how he delighted in peace, and rejoiced with those that rejoiced, and wept with those that wept, and delighted in the fellowship of God's people, and how courteous he was in his behavior towards others. We have heard of what a public spirit he was, how greatly concerned for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom and the good of his church, how diligent, laborious, and indefatigable in his endeavors to do good, how he studied for ways and means to promote this end, how he exercised his skill and contrivance, willingly foregoing those things that were in themselves lawful, and willingly enduring innumerable and extraordinary sufferings. My exhortation now is to imitate thus example; and to enforce this, I desire that several things may be considered.

I. Let it be considered, why it is that we have so much written of the good example of this apostle, unless that we might follow it. We often read those things in the Holy Scriptures which have now been set before us on this subject; and to what purpose, unless we apply them to ourselves? We had as good never have been informed how well the apostle behaved himself, if we do not endeavor to follow him. We all profess to be Christians, and we ought to form our notions of Christianity from what is written in the Scriptures by the prophets, and from the precepts and excellent examples that are there set before us. One great reason why many professors live no better, walk no more amiably, and are in so many things so unlovely is that they have not good notions of Christianity. They do not seem to have a right idea of that religion that is taught us in the New Testament. They have not well learned Christ. The notions that

some persons entertain of Christianity are very distorted, and ill conformed to the gospel. The notions of others are very erroneous. They lay the chief stress wrong upon things on which it ought not to be laid. They place religion almost altogether in some particular duties, leaving out others of great weight, and, it may be, the weightier matters of the law. And the reason why they have no better notions of Christianity is because they take their notions of it chiefly from those sources whence they ought not to take them. Some take them from the general cry or voice of the people, among whom they live. They see that others place religion merely, if not almost wholly, in such and such things. And hence their notions of Christianity are formed. Or they take their notions from the example of particular individuals now living, who are in great reputation for godliness. And their notion of Christianity is, that it consists in being like such persons. Hence they never have just notions of religion. 2 Cor. 10:12, "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." If we would have right notions of Christianity, we should observe those in whom it shone, of whom we have an account in the Scriptures. For they are the examples that God himself has selected to set before us to that end, that from thence we might form our notions of religion, and especially the example of this apostle. God knows how to select examples. If therefore we would have right notions of Christianity, we ought to follow the good example of the apostle Paul. He was certainly a Christian indeed, and an eminent Christian. We have God's abundant testimony. But Christianity is in itself an amiable thing, and so it appeared in the example of this apostle. And if the professors of it would form their notions of it from such examples as those, rather than from any particular customs and examples that we have now, it would doubtless appear much more amiable in their practice than it now does. It would win others. They would not be a stumbling-block. Their light would shine. They would command reverence and esteem, and be of powerful influence.

II. If we follow the good example which this apostle has set us, it will secure to us the like comfortable and sweet influence of God, that he enjoyed through the course of his life. Let us consider what a happy life the apostle lived, what peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, he possessed. 2 Cor. 1:12, "for our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our

conscience." How did he abound with comfort and joy, even in the midst of the greatest afflictions. 2 Cor. 1:3–5, "Blessed by God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For was the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth in Christ." In all his tribulation his joy was exceedingly great. He seems to want words to express the greatness of the joy which he possessed continually. He says he was filled with comfort, and was exceedingly joyful. 2 Cor. 7:4, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." How does the apostle's love seem to overflow with joy! 2 Cor. 6:10, 11, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." How happy is such a life! How well is such happiness worth pursuing! We are ourselves the occasion of our wounds and troubles. We bring darkness on our own souls. Professing Christians, by indulging their sloth, seek their own easy and comfort. But they defeat their own aim. The most laborious and the most self-denying Christians are the most happy. There are many who are complaining of their darkness, and inquiring what they shall do for light, and the comfortable presence of God.

III. This would be the way to be helped against temptation, and to triumph over our spiritual enemies as the apostle did. Satan assaulted him violently, and men continually persecuted him. The powers of hell combined against him. But God was with him, and made him more than a conqueror. He lived a life of triumph. 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Let us consider what an excellent privilege it would be thus to be helped against temptation. What a grief of mind is it to so often overcome.

IV. This would secure us honor from God, and an extraordinary intimacy with him. Moses enjoyed a great intimacy with God, but the apostle Paul in some respects a greater. Moses conversed with God in mount Sinai. Paul was caught up to the third heavens. He had abundant visions and revelations more than he has told us, lest any should think him to boast.

He was favored with more of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit than any other person. And though we cannot expect to be honored with intimacy with heaven in just the same way, yet if we in good earnest apply ourselves, we may have greater and greater intimacy, so that we may come with boldness, and converse with God as a friend.

This would be the way to make us great blessings in the world. The apostle, by means of such a spirit and such a behavior as you have heard, was made the greatest blessing to the world of any who ever lived on earth, except the man Christ Jesus himself. Wherever he went, there went a blessing with him. To have him enter a city was commonly made a greater mercy to it than if the greatest monarch on earth had come there, scattering his treasures around him among the inhabitants. Wherever he went, there did, as it were, a light shine about him, seemingly to enlighten the benighted children of men. Silver and gold he had none. But what he imparted to many thousands was worth more to them than if he had bestowed upon them the richest jewels of which the Roman emperor was possessed. And he was not only a blessing to that generation, but has been so since his death, by the fruits of what he did in his lifetime, the foundations he then laid, and by the writings which he has left for the good of mankind, to the end of the world. He then was, and ever since has been, a light to the church next in brightness to the Sun of righteousness. And it was by means of his excellent spirit and excellent behavior that he became such a blessing. Those were the things that God made useful in him for doing so much good. And if we should imitate the apostle in such a spirit and behavior, the undoubted consequence would be that we also should be made great blessings in the world. We should not live in vain, but should carry a blessing with us wherever we went. Instead of being cumberers of the ground, multitudes would be fed with our fruit, and would have reason to praise and bless God that he ever gave us a being. Now, how melancholy a consideration may it be to any persons that they have lived to no purpose, that the world would have been deprived of nothing, if they had never been born, and it may be, have been better without them than with them! How desirable is it to be a blessing! How great was the promise made to Abraham, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed!”

VI. For us to follow the good example of the apostle Paul, would be the way for us to die as he did. 2 Tim. 4:6-8, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.”

VII. This would secure us a distinguished crown of glory hereafter. It is thought by some, and not without great probability, that the apostle Paul is the very next in glory to the man Jesus Christ himself. This is probable from his having done more good than any, and from his having done it though so great labours and sufferings. The apostle tells us, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”

I shall conclude with mentioning some things as encouragements for us to endeavor to follow the excellent example of this great apostle. Many may be ready to say that it is in vain for them to try. The apostle was a person so greatly distinguished. It is in vain for them to endeavor to be like him. But for your encouragement, consider,

First, that the apostle was a man of like passions with us. He had naturally the same heart, the same corruptions, was under the same circumstances, the same guilt, and the same condemnation. There is this circumstance that attends the apostle’s example to encourage us to endeavor to imitate him, which did not attend the example of Christ. And yet we are called upon to imitate the example of Christ. This is probably one main reason why not only the example of Christ, but also those of mere men, are set before us in the Scriptures. Though you may think you have no great reason to hope to come up to the apostle’s degree, yet that is no reason why you should not make his good example your pattern, and labor, as far as in you lies, to copy after him.

Second, this apostle, before he was converted, was a very wicked man, and a vile persecutor. He often speaks of it himself. He sinned against great light.

Third, he had much greater hindrances and impediments to eminent holiness from without than any of us have. His circumstances made it

more difficult for him.

Fourth, the same God, the same Savior, and the same head of divine influence are ready to help our sincere endeavors, that helped him. Let us therefore not excuse ourselves, but in good earnest endeavor to follow so excellent an example. And then, however weak we are in ourselves, we may hope to experience Christ's support, and be able to say from our own experience, as the apostle did before him, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

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The Christian Pilgrim
or
The True Christian's Life a Journey Toward Heaven

Subject: This life ought so to be spent by us as to be only a journey towards heaven.

The apostle is here setting forth the excellencies of the grace of faith, by the glorious effects and happy issue of it in the saints of the Old Testament. He had spoken in the preceding part of the chapter particularly, of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. Having enumerated those instances, he takes notice that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers," etc. — In these words the apostle seems to have a more particular respect to Abraham and Sarah, and their kindred, who came with them from Haran, and from Ur of the Chaldees, as appears by the 15th verse, where the apostle says, "and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had

opportunity to have returned."

Two things may be observed here:

1. What these saints confessed of themselves, *viz. that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* — Thus we have a particular account concerning Abraham, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." (Gen. 23:4) And it seems to have been the general sense of the patriarchs, by what Jacob says to Pharaoh. "And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." (Gen. 47:9) "I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were." (Psa. 39:12)

2. The inference that the apostle draws from hence, *viz. that they sought another country as their home.* "For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country." In confessing that they were strangers, they plainly declared that this is not their country; that this is not the place where they are at home. And in confessing themselves to be pilgrims, they declared plainly that this is not their settled abode, but that they have respect to some other country, which they seek, and to which they are traveling.

SECTION I

That this life ought to be so spent by us, as to be only a journey or pilgrimage towards heaven.

HERE I would observe,

1. That we ought not to rest in the world and its enjoyments, but should desire heaven. We should "seek first the kingdom of God." (Mat. 6:33) We ought above all things to desire a heavenly happiness; to be with God and dwell with Jesus Christ. Though surrounded with outward enjoyments, and settled in families with desirable friends and relations; though we have companions whose society is delightful, and children in whom we see many promising qualifications; though we live by good

neighbors, and are generally beloved where known; we ought not to take our rest in these things as our portion. We should be so far from resting in them, that we should desire to leave them all, in God's due time. We ought to possess, enjoy and use them, with no other view but readily to quit them, whenever we are called to it, and to change them willingly and cheerfully for heaven.

A traveler is not wont to rest in what he meets with, however comfortable and pleasing, on the road. If he passes through pleasant places, flowery meadows, or shady groves, he does not take up his content in these things, but only takes a transient view of them as he goes along. He is not enticed by fine appearances to put off the thought of proceeding. No, but his journey's end is in his mind. If he meets with comfortable accommodations at an inn, he entertains no thoughts of settling there. He considers that these things are not his own, that he is but a stranger, and when he has refreshed himself, or tarried for a night, he is for going forward. And it is pleasant to him to think that so much of the way is gone.

So should we desire heaven more than the comforts and enjoyments of this life. The apostle mentions it as an encouraging, comfortable consideration to Christians, that they draw nearer their happiness. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." — Our hearts ought to be loose to these things, as that of a man on a journey, that we may as cheerfully part with them whenever God calls. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. 7:29-31) These things are only lent to us for a little while, to serve a present turn, but we should set our *hearts* on heaven, as our inheritance forever.

2. We ought to seek heaven, by traveling in the way that lead thither. This is a way of holiness. We should choose and desire to travel thither in this way and in no other, and part with all those carnal appetites which, as weights, will tend to hinder us. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set

before us." (Heb 12:1) However pleasant the gratification of any appetite may be, we must lay it aside if it be a hindrance, or a stumbling block, in the way to heaven.

We should travel on in the way of obedience to all God's commands, even the difficult as well as the easy, denying all our sinful inclinations and interests. The way to heaven is ascending. We must be content to travel up hill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh. We should follow Christ: the path he traveled, was the right way to heaven. We should take up our cross and follow him, in meekness and lowliness of heart, obedience and charity, diligence to do good, and patience under afflictions. The way to heaven is a heavenly life, an imitation of those who are in heaven in their holy enjoyments, loving, adoring, serving, and praising God and the Lamb. Even if we *could* go to heaven with the gratification of our lusts, we should prefer a way of holiness and conformity to the spiritual self-denying rules of the gospel.

3. We should travel on in this way in a laborious manner. — Long journeys are attended with toil and fatigue, especially if through a wilderness. Persons in such a case expect no other than to suffer hardships and weariness. — So we should travel in this way of holiness, improving our time and strength, to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that are in the way. The land we have to travel through, is a wilderness. There are many mountains, rocks, and rough places that we must go over, and therefore there is a necessity that we should lay out our strength.

4. Our whole lives ought to be spent in traveling this road. — We ought to begin *early*. This should be the *first* concern, when persons become capable of acting. When they first set out in the *world*, they should set out on *this* journey. — And we ought to travel on with *assiduity*. It ought to be the work of every day. We should often think of our journey's end; and make it our daily work to travel on in the way that leads to it. — He who is on a journey is often thinking of the destined place, and it is his daily care and business to get along and to improve his time to get towards his journey's end. Thus should heaven be continually in our thoughts, and the immediate entrance or passage to it, *viz.* death, should be present with us. — We ought to *persevere* in this way as long as we live.

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1) Though the road be difficult and toilsome, we must hold out with patience, and be content to endure hardships. Though the journey be long, yet we must not stop short, but hold on till we arrive at the place we seek. Nor should we be discouraged with the length and difficulties of the way, as the children of Israel were, and be for turning back again. All our thought and design should be to press forward till we arrive.

5. We ought to be continually growing in holiness, and in that respect coming nearer and nearer to heaven. — We should be endeavoring to come nearer to heaven, in being more heavenly, becoming more and more like the inhabitants of heaven in respect of holiness and conformity to God, the knowledge of God and Christ, in clear views of the glory of God, the beauty of Christ, and the excellency of divine things, as we come nearer to the beatific vision. — We should labor to be continually growing in divine love — that this may be an increasing flame in our hearts, till they ascend wholly in this flame — in obedience and a heavenly conversation, that we may do the will of God on earth as the angels do in heaven, in comfort and spiritual joy, [and] in sensible communion with God and Jesus Christ. Our path should be as “the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day.” (Pro. 4:18) We ought to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness: after an increase in righteousness. “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the work, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Pet. 2:2) The perfection of heaven should be our mark. “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13, 14)

6. All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this. — When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinated to the aim of getting to his journey’s end. And if he carries money or provisions with him, it is to supply him in his journey. So we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business, and all our temporal enjoyments, to this affair of traveling to heaven. When anything we have becomes a clog and hindrance to us, we should quit it immediately. The use of our worldly enjoyments and possessions, should be with such a view, and in

such a manner, as to further us in our way heavenward. Thus we should eat, and drink, and clothe ourselves, and improve the conversation and enjoyment of friends. And whatever business we are setting about, whatever design we are engaging in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design.

SECTION II

Why the Christian's life is a journey, or pilgrimage?

1. THIS world is not our abiding place. Our continuance here is but very short. Man's days on the earth, are as a shadow. It was never designed by God that this world should be our home. Neither did God give us these temporal accommodations for that end. If God has given us ample estates, and children, or other pleasant friends, it is with no such design, that we should be furnished here, as for a settled abode, but with a design that we should use them for the present, and then leave them in a very little time. When we are called to any secular business, or charged with the care of a family, [and] if we improve our lives to any other purpose than as a journey toward heaven, all our labor will be lost. If we spend our lives in the pursuit of a temporal happiness, as riches or sensual pleasures, credit and esteem from men, delight in our children and the prospect of seeing them well brought up and well settled, etc. — all these things will be of little significancy to us. Death will blow up all our hopes, and will put an end to these enjoyments. "The places that have known us, will know us no more" and "the eye that has seen us, shall see us no more." We must be taken away forever from all these things, and it is uncertain when: it may be soon after we are put into the possession of them. And then, where will be all our worldly employments and enjoyments, when we are laid in the silent grave! "So man lieth down, and riseth not again, till the heavens be no more." (Job 14:12)

2. The future world was designed to be our settled and everlasting abode. There it was intended that we should be fixed, and there alone is a lasting habitation and a lasting inheritance. The present state is short and transitory, but our state in the other world is everlasting. And as we are there at first, so we must be without change. Our state in the future

world, therefore, being eternal, is of so much greater importance than our state here, that all our concerns in this world should be wholly subordinated to it.

3. Heaven is that place alone where our highest end and highest good is to be obtained. God hath made us for himself. “Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” Therefore, then do we attain to our highest end, when we are brought to God: but that is by being brought to heaven, for that is God’s throne, the place of his special presence. There is but a very imperfect union with God to be had in this world, a very imperfect knowledge of him in the midst of much darkness: a very imperfect conformity to God, mingled with abundance of estrangement. Here we can serve and glorify God, but in a very imperfect manner: our service being mingled with sin, which dishonors God. — But when we get to heaven (if ever that be), we shall be brought to a perfect union with God and have more clear views of him. There we shall be fully conformed to God, without any remaining sin: for “we shall see him as he is.” There we shall serve God perfectly and glorify him in an exalted manner, even to the utmost of the powers and capacity of our nature. Then we shall perfectly give up ourselves to God: our hearts will be pure and holy offerings, presented in a flame of divine love.

God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. — To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is *infinitely* better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean. — Therefore it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven, as it becomes us to make the seeking of our highest end and proper good, the whole work of our lives, to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for, or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end, and true happiness?

4. Our present state, and all that belongs to it, is designed by him that made all things, to be wholly in order to another world. — This world was

made for a place of preparation for another. Man's mortal life was given him, that he might be prepared for his fixed state. And all that God has here given us, is given to this purpose. The sun shines, the rain falls upon us, and the earth yields her increase to us for this end. Civil, ecclesiastical, and family affairs, and all our personal concerns, are designed and ordered in subordination to a future world, by the maker and disposer of all things. To this therefore they ought to be subordinated by us.

SECTION III

Instruction afforded by the consideration, that life is a journey or pilgrimage, towards heaven.

1. THIS doctrine may teach us moderation in our mourning for the loss of such dear friends, who while they lived, improved their lives to right purposes. If they lived a holy life, then their lives were a journey towards heaven. And why should we be immoderate in mourning, when they are got to their journey's end? Death, though it appears to us with a frightful aspect, is to them a great blessing. Their end is happy, and better than their beginning. "The day of their death, is better than the day of their birth." (Ecc. 7:1) While they lived, they desired heaven, and chose it above this world or any of its enjoyments. For this they earnestly longed, and why should we grieve that they have obtained it? — Now they have got to their Father's house. They find more comfort a thousand times now [that] they are gone home, than they did in their journey. In this world they underwent much labor and toil: it was a wilderness they passed through. There were many difficulties in the way: mountains and rough places. It was laborious and fatiguing to travel the road, and they had many wearisome days and nights: but now they have got to their everlasting rest. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13) They look back upon the difficulties, and sorrows, and dangers of life, rejoicing that they have surmounted them all.

We are ready to look upon death as their calamity, and to mourn that those who were so dear to us should be in the dark grave: that they are there transformed to corruption and worms, taken away from their dear

children and enjoyments, etc. as though they were in awful circumstances. But this is owing to our infirmity. They are in a happy condition, inconceivably blessed. They do not mourn, but rejoice with exceeding joy: their mouths are filled with joyful songs, and they drink at rivers of pleasure. They find no mixture of grief that they have changed their earthly enjoyments, and the company of mortals, for heaven. Their life here, though in the best circumstances, was attended with much that was adverse and afflictive, but now there is an end to all adversity. "They shall hunger no more nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Rev. 7:16, 17)

It is true, we shall see them no more in this world, yet we ought to consider that we are traveling towards the same place; and why should we break our hearts that they have got there before us? We are following after them, and hope as soon as we get to our journey's end, to be with them again, in better circumstances. A degree of mourning for near relations when departed is not inconsistent with Christianity, but very agreeable to it. For as long as we are flesh and blood, we have animal propensities and affections. But we have just reason that our mourning should be mingled with joy. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others that have no hope:" (1 Thes. 4:13) *i.e.* that they should not sorrow as the heathen, who had no knowledge of a future happiness. This appears by the following verse; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

2. If our lives ought to be only a journey towards heaven, how ill do they improve their lives, that spend them in traveling towards hell? — Some men spend their whole lives, from their infancy to their dying day, in going down the broad way to destruction. They not only draw nearer to hell as to time, but they every day grow more ripe for destruction. They are more assimilated to the inhabitants of the internal world. While others press forward in the straight and narrow way to life and laboriously travel up the hill toward Zion, against the inclinations and tendency of the flesh, these run with a swift career down to eternal death.

This is the employment of every day, with all wicked men, and the whole day is spent in it. As soon as ever they awake in the morning, they set out anew in the way to hell and spend every waking moment in it. They begin in early days. “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” (Psa. 58:3) They hold on it with perseverance. Many of them who live to be old, are never weary in it. Though they live to be an hundred years old, they will not cease traveling in the way to hell till they arrive there. And all the concerns of life are subordinated to this employment. A wicked man is a servant of sin, [and] his powers and faculties are employed in the service of sin and in fitness for hell. And all his possessions are so used by him as to be subservient to the same purpose. Men spend their time in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath Thus do all unclean persons, who live in lascivious practices in secret: all malicious persons, all profane persons that neglect the duties of religion. Thus do all unjust persons, and those who are fraudulent and oppressive in their dealings. Thus do all backbiters and revilers, [and] all covetous persons that set their hearts chiefly on the riches of this world. Thus do tavern-haunters, and frequenters of evil company, and many other kinds that might be mentioned. Thus the bulk of mankind are hastening onward in the broad way to destruction, which is, as it were, filled up with the multitude that are going in it with one accord. And they are every day going to hell out of this broad way by thousands. Multitudes are continually flowing down into the great lake of fire and brimstone, as some mighty river constantly disembogues its water into the ocean.

3. Hence when persons are converted they do but begin their work and set out in the way they have to go. — They never till then do anything at that work in which their whole lives ought to be spent. Persons before conversion never take a step that way. Then does a man first set out on his journey, when he is brought home to Christ, and so far is he from having done his work, that his care and labor in his Christian work and business, is then but begun, in which he must spend the remaining part of his life.

Those persons do ill, who when they are converted and have obtained a hope of their being in a good condition, do not strive as earnestly as they

did before, while they were under awakenings. They ought, henceforward, as long as they live, to be as earnest and laborious, as watchful and careful as ever: yea, they should increase more and more. It is no just excuse that now they have obtained conversion. Should not we be as diligent as that we ourselves may be that we may serve and glorify God, happy? And if we have obtained grace, yet we ought to strive as much that we may obtain the other degrees that are before, as we did to obtain that small degree that is behind. The apostle tells us that he forgot what was behind and reached forth towards what was before. (Phil. 3:13)

Yea, those who are converted have now a further reason to strive for grace. For they have seen something of its excellency. A man who has once tasted the blessings of Canaan, has more reason to press towards it than he had before. And they who are converted, should strive to "make their calling and election sure." All those who are converted are not sure of it, and those who are sure, do not know that they shall be always so, and still, seeking and serving God with the utmost diligence, is the way to have assurance and to have it maintained.

SECTION IV

An exhortation so to spend the present life, that it may only be a journey towards heaven

Labor to obtain such a disposition of mind that you may choose heaven for your inheritance and home, and may earnestly long for it and be willing to change this world, and all its enjoyments, for heaven. Labor to have your heart taken up so much about heaven, and heavenly enjoyments, as that you may rejoice when God calls you to leave your best earthly friends and comforts for heaven, there to enjoy God and Christ.

Be persuaded to travel in the way that leads to heaven: *viz.* in holiness, self-denial, mortification, obedience to all the commands of God, following Christ's example [and] in a way of a heavenly life, or imitation of the saints and angels in heaven. Let it be your daily work, from morning till night, and hold out in it to the end. Let nothing stop or discourage you, or turn you aside from this road. And let all other concerns be subordinated to this. Consider the reasons that have been

mentioned why you should thus spend your life: that this world is not your abiding place, that the future world is to be your everlasting abode, and that the enjoyments and concerns of this world are given entirely in order to another. And consider further for motive.

1. How worthy is heaven that your life should be wholly spent as a journey towards it. — To what better purpose can you spend your life, whether you respect your duty or your interest? What better end can you propose to your journey, than to obtain heaven? You are placed in this world with a choice given you, that you may travel which way you please, and one way leads to heaven. Now, can you direct your course better than this way? All men have some aim or other in living. Some mainly seek worldly things. They spend their days in such pursuits. But is not heaven, where is fullness of joy forever, much more worthy to be sought by you? How can you better employ your strength, use your means, and spend your days, than in traveling the road that leads to the everlasting enjoyment of God: to his glorious presence, to the new Jerusalem, to the heavenly mount Zion, where all your desires will be filled and no danger of ever losing your happiness? — No man is at home in this world, whether he choose heaven or not: here he is but a transient person. Where can you choose your home better than in heaven?

2. This is the way to have death comfortable to us. — To spend our lives so as to be only a journeying towards heaven, is the way to be free from bondage and to have the prospect and forethought of death comfortable. Does the traveler think of his journey's end with fear and terror? Is terrible to him to think that he has almost got to his journey's end? Were the children of Israel sorry after forty years' travel in the wilderness, when they had almost got to Canaan? This is the way to be able to part with the world without grief. Does it grieve the traveler when he has got home, to quit his staff and load of provisions that he had to sustain him by the way?

3. No more of your life will be pleasant to think of when you come to die, than has been spent after this manner. — If you have spent none of your life this way, your whole life will be terrible to you to think of, unless you die under some great delusion. You will see then, that all of your life that has been spent otherwise, is lost. You will then see the vanity of all other

aims that you may have proposed to yourself. The thought of what you here possessed and enjoyed will not be pleasant to you, unless you can think also that you have subordinated them to this purpose.

4. Consider that those who are willing thus to spend their lives as a journey towards heaven may have heaven. — Heaven, however high and glorious, is attainable to such poor worthless creatures as we are. We may attain that glorious region which is the habitation of angels: yea, the dwelling-place of the Son of God, and where is the glorious presence of the great Jehovah. And we may have it freely, without money and without price. If we are but willing to travel the road that leads to it and bend our course that way as long as we live, we may and shall have heaven for our eternal resting place.

5. Let it be considered that if our lives be not a journey towards heaven, they will be a journey to hell. All mankind, after they have been here a short while, go to either of the two great receptacles of all that depart out of this world: the one in *heaven*; whither the bulk of mankind throng. And one or the other of these must be the issue of our course in this world.

I shall conclude by giving a few *directions*:

1. Labor to get a sense of the vanity of this world, on account of the little satisfaction that is to be enjoyed here, its short continuance, and unserviceableness when we most stand in need of help, *viz.* on a death-bed. — All men, that live any considerable time in the world, might see enough to convince them of its vanity, if they would but consider. — Be persuaded therefore to exercise consideration when you see and hear, from time to time, of the death of others. Labor to turn your thoughts this way. See the vanity of the world in such a glass.

2. Labor to be much acquainted with heaven. — If you are not acquainted with it, you will not be likely to spend your life as a journey thither. You will not be sensible of its worth, nor will you long for it. Unless you are much conversant in your mind with a better good, it will be exceeding difficult to you to have your hearts loose from these things, to use them only in subordination to something else, and be ready to part with them

for the sake of that better good. — Labor therefore to obtain a realizing sense of a heavenly world, to get a firm belief of its reality, and to be very much conversant with it in your thoughts.

3. Seek heaven only by Jesus Christ. — Christ tells us that he is the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) He tells us that he is the door of the sheep. “I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved; and go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9) If we therefore would improve our lives as a journey towards heaven, we must seek it by him and not by our own righteousness, as expecting to obtain it only for his sake: looking to him [and] having our dependence on him, who has procured it for us by his merit. And expect [that] strength to walk in holiness, the way that leads to heaven, only from him.

4. Let Christians help one another in going this journey. — There are many ways whereby Christians might greatly forward one another in their way to heaven, as by religious conference, etc. Therefore let them be exhorted to go this journey as it were in company: conversing together, and assisting one another. Company is very desirable in a journey, but in none so much as this. — Let them go united and not fall out by the way, which would be to hinder one another, but use all means they can to help each other up the hill. — This would ensure a more successful traveling and a more joyful meeting at their Father’s house in glory.

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The Portion of the Righteous

Subject: Glory, honor, and peace is the portion that God has given to all the godly.

The apostle in the preceding verses declared what is the portion of wicked men; *viz.* indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; in this verse declares what is the portion assigned to good men. In the words of the text we should observe,

I. The description of a good man; *viz. the man that worketh good*. Such men are here described by the fruit which they bring forth. Christ has taught us that the tree is known by its fruit. Paul here describes them by that which most distinguishes them; not by the external privileges which they enjoy, or the light under which they live; but by the fruits which they bring forth. For as the apostle says, in verse 13, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified." That which distinguishes good men from bad, is not that they *hear* good, or that they *profess* good, or that they *intend* good; but that they *do* good. They are *workers* of good.

II. The reward of such a man; viz. "*glory, honor, and peace*;" in which are mentioned three sorts of good that are assigned to them as their portion. 1. Their moral good, expressed by the word *glory*. Glory shall be given them; *i.e.* they shall be made excellent and glorious. They shall be endued with those excellent and glorious qualifications, which will render them beautiful and lovely. They shall have the image of God, and be partakers of his holiness. Thus the word glory is used by St. Paul, 2 Cor. 3:18. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory. 2. Their relative good; *Honor*. They shall be in most honorable circumstances. They shall be advanced to great dignity, receive a relation to God, and Christ, and the heavenly inhabitants, and God shall put honor upon them. 3. Their natural good; *Peace*: which, as it is used in the Scriptures, signifies happiness; and includes all comfort, joy, and pleasure.

I shall endeavor to show from the text, that glory, honor, and peace are

the portion which God has given to all good men. In describing their happiness, I shall consider the successive parts of it; both here and hereafter.

First, I propose to treat of their happiness in this world. Those who are truly good men have been the subjects of a real thorough work of conversion, and have had their hearts turned from sin to God. Of such persons it may be said, that they are truly blessed. They are often pronounced blessed by God. He is infinitely wise, and sees and knows all things. He perfectly knows who are blessed, and who are miserable. He hath said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." — "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven." — "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." — "Blessed are the poor in spirit" — "the meek" — "the merciful" — "the pure in heart."

In considering the happiness of the righteous in this world, I shall pursue the method which the text obviously points out, and shall consider, I. The excellency; II. The honor; and , III. The peace and pleasure, which God bestows upon them in the present life.

I. The excellency or glory. The sum of this consists in their having the image of God upon them. When a person is converted, he has the image of God enstamped on him. Col. 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." and Eph. 4:23, 24, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness." They have their eyes opened, and are led into such a sight of God and thorough acquaintance with him, as changes the soul into the image of God's glory.

What can render a creature more excellent than to have the very image of the Creator? and how blessed a change is that which is wrought in conversion, which brings a man thus to be in the image of God! For though the image of God in Christians in this world is very imperfect, yet it is real. The real image of God is most excellent, though it be imperfect.

Hence, “the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,” and “the saints are the excellent of the earth.” The image of God is their glory, and it may well be called glory, for imperfect as it is, it renders them glorious in the eyes of the angels of heaven. The image of God is a greater beauty in their eyes, than the brightness and glory of the sun in the firmament.

Indeed the saints have no excellency, as they are in and of themselves. In them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. They are in themselves poor, guilty, vile creatures, and see themselves to be so. But they have an excellency and glory in them, because they have Christ dwelling in them. The excellency that is in them, though it be but as a spark, yet it is something ten thousand times more excellent than any ruby, or the most precious pearl that ever was found on the earth; and that because it is something divine, something of God.

This holy heavenly spark is put into the soul in conversion, and God maintains it there. All the powers of hell cannot put it out, for God will keep it alive, and it shall prevail more and more. Though it be but small, yet it is powerful; it has influence over the heart to govern it, and brings forth holy fruits in the life, and will not cease to prevail till it has consumed all the corruption that is left in the heart, and till it has turned the whole soul into a pure, holy, and heavenly flame, till the soul of man becomes like the angels, a flame of fire, and shines as the brightness of the firmament.

II. I would consider the honor to which Christians are advanced in this world; and the sum of this is, that they are the children of God. This is an excellent and glorious degree of honor and dignity to which they are admitted; and that because the Being to whom they are related is an infinitely glorious being, a being of incomprehensible majesty and excellency; and also because the relation is so near and honorable a relation. It is a great honor to be the servant of God. John the Baptist said of Christ, that he was not worthy to stoop down to loose the latchet of Christ’s shoes. But Christians are not only admitted to be the servants of God, but his children; and how much more honorable in a family is the relation of children than that of servants! Gal. 4:7, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Rom. 8:16, 17, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit

that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The honor appears the greater if it be considered how Christians are brought into their relation to God; and that is by Christ. They become the children of God by virtue of their union with the only begotten and eternal Son of God. They are united to him as his spouse, and members of his body, as his flesh and his bones, and as one spirit; and, therefore, as Christ is the Son of God, so they are sons. Therefore are they joint heirs with Christ, because they are joint sons with him. To this end God sent forth his Son, that so they might through him also be sons. Gal. 4:4, 5, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And therefore they partaking of the relation of the Son, so are they also of the spirit of the Son; as it follows in the next verse, "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hears, crying, Abba, Father."

Herein Christians are the children of God in a more honorable way than the angels themselves; for the angels are the sons of God by virtue of that relation which they have to God, as they are in themselves singly and separately. But Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only begotten Son, in his sonship, whose sonship is immensely more honorable than that of the angels. And Christians, being the children of God, are honored of God as such. They are sometimes owned as such by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God. For, as it is found in the verse already cited from Romans, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." They are treated as such in the great value God puts upon them, for they are his jewels, those which he has set apart for himself; and he is tender of them as of the apple of his eye. He disregards wicked men in comparison of them. He will give kings for them and princes for their life. He is jealous for them. He is very angry with those that hurt them. If any offend them, it were better for them that a millstone were cast about their neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea. He loves them with a very great and wonderful love. He pities them as a father pities his children. He will protect them, and

defend them and provide for them, as a father provides for his children. This honor have all they that fear and love God, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Peace and pleasure are also the portion of Christians in this world. Their peace and joy in God begin in the present life, and are no less excellent than the glory with which he invests them and the honor to which he advances them. We ought here to consider, 1st, what foundation they have for peace and joy. 2nd, what peace and joy they actually have.

1st. Their foundation for peace and joy is in their safety and their riches.

1. They have ground for peace because of their safety. They are safe in Jesus Christ from the wrath of God and from the power of Satan. They that are in Christ shall never perish, for none shall pluck them out of his hand. They are delivered from all their dreadful misery, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which shall come on ungodly men. They were naturally exposed to it, but they are delivered from it; their sins are all forgiven them. The handwriting is eternally blotted out. Their sins are all done away; God has cast them behind his back , and buried their sorrows in the depths of the sea, and they shall no more come into remembrance. They are most safe from misery, for they are built on Christ their everlasting rock. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. They have the faithful promise of God for their security, that is established as a sure witness in heaven. They have an interest in that covenant, that is well ordered in all things and sure. “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

2. They have a foundation of unspeakable comfort and joy, because of their riches. They have true and infinite riches. They are the possessors and heirs of something real and substantial, and that is worthy to be called by the name of riches. The things they possess are excellent, more precious than gold and than rubies; all the desirable things of this world cannot equal them, and they have enough of it. The riches that they have given them of God are inexhaustible. It is sufficient for them; there is no

end of it. They have a fountain of infinite good for their comfort, and contentment, and joy; for God has given himself to them to be their portion, and he is a God of infinite glory. There is glory in him to engage their contemplation forever and ever, without ever being satiated. And he is also an infinite fountain of love; for God is love, yea, an ocean of love without shore or bottom! The glorious Son of God is theirs; that lovely one, who was from all eternity God's delight, rejoicing always before him. All his beauty is their portion, and his dying love is theirs, his very heart is theirs, and his glory and happiness in heaven are theirs, so far as their capacity will allow them to partake of it; for he has promised it to them, and has taken possession of it in their name. And the saints are also rich in the principle that is in them. They have inward riches which they carry about with them in their own hearts. They are rich in faith. Jam. 2:5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" They have the grace of God in their hearts, which is a most excellent treasure, and a good foundation of joy; for it is the seed of joy. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And the seed that is sown in their hearts, is the grace of God there. That is a seed that, however it lies hid, will certainly in due time spring up, and put forth itself, and will bud, and blossom, and will bring forth rich fruit. These riches are the true riches. This is the good which God reserves for his friends. God distributes silver and gold and such like things among his enemies, because he slights them and regards them not. They are contemptible things in his eyes, as we throw husks to swine. But he has reserved better things for his children, of which no ungodly man, though a prince or monarch, shall partake. This is the ground which Christians have of peace and pleasure in this world. However, the saints cannot always take comfort, and do not always taste the sweetness that there is in store for them, by reason of the darkness and clouds that sometimes interpose. But though they may walk in great darkness for a long time, yet they are happy notwithstanding.

2nd. They sometimes in this world have the actual enjoyment of peace and pleasure that are most excellent. Sometimes the clouds that are in the way are removed, and Christians are enabled to behold the ground they have for rejoicing. Though God's glory and love be often hid from them,

as it were with a veil, or at least, so as to hinder a clear view of it, yet God sometimes is pleased to remove the veil, to draw the curtain, and to give the saints sweet visions. Sometimes there is, as it were, a window opened in heaven, and Christ shows himself through the lattice. They have sometimes a beam of sweet light breaking forth from above into the soul. And God and the Redeemer sometimes come to them, and make friendly visits to them, and manifest themselves to them. Sometimes Christians have seasons of light and gladness for some considerable period, and at other times their views are more transient. Sometimes their light and joy arise in reading of the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in hearing the word preached, sometimes at the Lord's table, sometimes in the duty of prayer, sometimes in Christian conference, sometimes in meditation when they are about their occupations, as in the time of more set and solemn meditations; and sometimes in the watches of the night.

Those spiritual joys and pleasures which believers possess in this world, are chiefly of three sorts.

1. The joy which they have in a sense of their own good estate; in the sense they have of the pardon of their sins, and their safety from hell; and a sense of the favor of God, and in the hope they have of eternal life.

2. The joy and delight, which they have in the apprehension and view of God's excellency and love. The joy of a Christian does not consist merely in the sense of his own good estate, as natural men often are ready to imagine; but there is an excellent, transcendent, soul-satisfying sweetness that sometimes fills the soul in the apprehension of the excellency of God. The soul dwells upon the thought, fixes on it, and takes complacence in God as the greatest good, the most delightful object of its contemplation. This pleasure is the sweetest pleasure that a Christian ever feels, and is the foretaste of the pleasures of heaven itself. Herein sometimes the saints do boast of the cluster of Canaan. This sort of joy is evidence of sincerity above any other joy, a more sure evidence than a rejoicing in our own good estate. From the joy which the Christian has in the view of the glory and excellency of God; the consideration of the love of God to him cannot be excluded. When he rejoices in God as a glorious God, he rejoices in him the more because he is his God, and in consideration of there being a union between him and this God. Otherwise, if there were a

separation, the view of God's excellency, though it would raise joy one way, would proportionally excite grief another. God is sometimes pleased to manifest his love to the saints, and commonly at those times, when a Christian has the greatest views of God's excellency, he has also of his love. The soul is spiritually sensible of God as being present with it, and as manifesting and communication himself; and it has sweet communion with God, and tastes the sweetness of his love, and knows a little what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge.

3. The third kind of joy is found in doing that which is to the glory of God. The true love of God makes this sweet and delightful to the soul. The joy of a Christian not only arises in knowing and viewing but also in doing; not only in apprehending God, but also in doing for God. For he loves God not only with a love of complacence, but a love of benevolence also. And as a love of complacence delights in beholding, so does a love of benevolence delight in doing for the object beloved. The peace and pleasure which the Christian has in these things, is far better more desirable than pleasures that this world can afford, and especially than the pleasures of wicked men; and that on the following accounts.

(1). There is light in this pleasure. The peace and pleasures of wicked men have their foundation in darkness. When wicked men have any quietness or joy, it is because they are blind, and do not see what is their real condition. If it were not for blindness and delusion, they could have no peace nor comfort in anything. There needs nothing but to open a wicked man's eyes, and let him look about him and see where he is, and it would be enough to destroy all the quietness and comfort of the most prosperous wicked man in the world. But on the contrary, the peace of a godly man, is a peace that arises from light. When he sees things most as they are, then he has most peace; and the distress and trouble which he sometimes feels, arise from clouds and darkness. When a godly man is in the greatest fear and distress, if he did not know what a happy state he were in, he would at the same time rejoice with unspeakable joy; so that his pleasure is not founded, like that of wicked men, in stupidity, but in sensibleness; not in blindness, but in light, and sight, and knowledge.

(2). There is rest in this pleasure. He that has found this joy, finds a sweet

repose and acquiescence of the soul in it. It sweetly calms the soul and allays its disappointments. Christ says, Mat. 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is a sweet contentment in it; the soul that tastes it, desires no better pleasure. There is a satisfaction in it. The soul that has been wandering before, when it comes to taste of this fountain, finds in it that which satisfies its desires and cravings, and discovers that in it which it needs in order to its happiness. John 4:14, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” It is quite otherwise with the pleasures of ungodly men. There is no true rest in them, they are not enjoyed with inward quietness, there is no true peace enjoyed within, neither do they afford contentment. But those wicked men that have the most worldly pleasures, are yet restlessly inquiring, “who will show us any good?” “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Wicked men in the midst of their enjoyment of pleasure have no true rest, neither do their reflections on it afford rest; but only remorse of conscience, and disquietude of soul, under the guilt that is contracted. But the pleasures of the godly afford rest in the enjoyment, and rest and sweetness in the reflection. It oftentimes calms and refreshers the soul to look on past comforts.

(3). There is life in it. It is a pleasure that strengthens and nourishes and preserves the soul, and gives it life, and does not corrupt and destroy and bring it to death, as do sinful pleasures. The pleasures of the wicked are poison to the soul, they tend to enfeeble it, to consume it, and kill it. But the pleasures of the godly feed the soul, and do not consume it; they strengthen, and do not weaken it; they exalt, and do not debase it; they enrich, and do not impoverish it. Death and corruption are the natural fruit of the pleasures of sin, but life is the fruit of spiritual pleasures. Gal. 6:8, “For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” The life in which this joy consists, and to which it tends, is the most excellent life, and the only life worthy of the name; it is spiritual, and the beginning of eternal life. This pleasure is a fountain springing up to everlasting life. John 4:14.

(4). There is substance in it. This pleasure is not a mere shadow, an empty delight, as earthly pleasures are, but it is substantial joy. The pleasures of sin last but a little season, they are the crackling of thorns under a pot, or as the blazing meteors of the night, that appear for a moment, and then vanish. But this pleasure is like the durable light of the stars or the sun. Worldly pleasures are easily overthrown. A little thing will spoil all the pleasures of a king's court. Haman, in the midst of all his prosperity and greatness, could say, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." But the joys of the saints are such as the changes of time cannot overthrow. If God lifts up the light of his countenance, this will compose and rejoice the heart under the saddest tidings. They joy in affliction. Their enemies cannot overthrow this joy. The devil and even death itself cannot overthrow it; but oftentimes it lives, and is in its greatest height, in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. When in the most tormenting death, how often have the martyrs sung in the midst of the flames, and under the hands of their cruel tormentors! Job 35:10, "But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

(5). There is holiness in it. It is the excellency of these joys that they are holy joys. They are not like the polluted stream of sinful pleasures, but they are pure and holy. Rev. 22:1, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." These pleasures do not defile the soul, but purify it; they do not deform, but beautify it; they not only greatly delight the soul, but render it more excellent. They impart something more of God, more of a divine disposition and temper, dispose to holy actions, and cause the soul to shine as Moses's face did when he had been conversing with God in the mount, and as Stephen's face, which was as the face of an angel, when he was heaven opened, and the Son on man standing on the right hand of God. Thus these pleasures make the soul more excellent, and more divine, as well as more happy.

(6). There is sometimes glory in it. God sometimes unveils his face, and lest in light more plentifully. This is a delight and joy, the excellency, and sweetness, and admirableness of which cannot be expressed. It is a kind of glory that fills the soul. So excellent is its nature, that the sweetness

earthly delight vanishes into nothing, and appears as base and vile as dross and dirt, or as the mere mire of the street. It is bright above all that is earthly, as the sun in brighter than the glow-worm. Of this, the apostle takes notice. 1 Pet. 1:8, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Secondly, I proceed to consider the happiness of the saints in death. It may seem a mystery to the world that men should be happy in death, which the world looks upon as the most terrible of all things; but thus it is to the saints. Their happiness is built upon a rock, and it will stand the shock of death. When the storm and floods of death come with their greatest violence, it stands firm, and neither death nor hell can overthrow it. Here,

I. Death is rendered no death to them. It is not worthy of the name of death. As the life of a wicked man is not worthy of the name of life, so the death of a godly man is not worthy of the name of death. It is not looked upon as any death at all in the eyes of God, who sees all things as they are, nor is it called death by him. Hence Christ promises, that those who believe in him shall not die. John 6:50, 51, "this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." It is no death to the saints, because it is no destruction to them. The notion of death implies destruction, or perishing, in it; but the godly are not destroyed by death, death cannot destroy them; for as Christ says, they shall never perish. John 3:15, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." A godly man, when he dies, in no wise perishes. There is no end put to his life as a Christian, for that is a spiritual life that remains unquenched by death. A wicked man, when he dies, dies indeed, because then an end is put to all the life which he has; for he has no other life but temporal life. But the life of a Christian is hid with Christ, and safely laid up with him in heaven; and therefore death cannot reach his life, because it cannot reach heaven. Death can no more reach the believer's life than Christ's life. No death can reach Christ our life now though he died once.

But now he has forever sat down at the right hand of God. He says, for the comfort of his saints, Rev. 1:18, “I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.” Death not only cannot destroy a Christian, but it cannot hurt him. Christ carries him on eagle wings aloft on high, out of the reach of death. Death, with respect to him, is disarmed of his power. And every Christian may say, “O death, where is thy sting?” Death was once indeed a terrible enemy, but now he has become weak. He spent all his strength on Christ; in killing him, he killed himself; he was conquered then, and has now no power to hurt his followers. Death is now but the shadow of what he would have been if Christ had not conquered him. He was once a lion, but now he is but a lamb. A good man nay indeed be harassed with fears of death, and may be much terrified when going through the valley of the shadow of death, but that is no just ground of any terror, and if the saints are terrified, it is only through their infirmity and darkness. As a child is frightened in the dark where there is no danger, because he is a child, so a good man may be affrighted at the terrible looks of death. But he will find this awful appearance to be only a shadow, that can look terribly, but can do nothing terrible. Death may, through the weakness of the saints, trouble them, and exercise them, but he cannot destroy the ground they have for comfort and support. When death comes to a wicked man, all those things on which he built his comfort fail, their foundation is overflown with a flood. Job 22:16. But the foundation of the peace and comfort of the godly man is not shaken at such a time. Oftentimes the saints are actually carried above all the fears and terrors of death; they see that it is but a shadow, and are not afraid. Not only their foundation of comfort remains, but that peace and comfort itself is undisturbed, the light shines through the darkness, and the lamb-like nature of death appears through the shadow of the lion. The godly have a God to stand by them when they come to die, in whose love and favor they may shelter themselves, in whose favor is life, yea, life in death; and they have a blessed Savior to be with them, to uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness. These are the friends they have with them, when they are going to take their leave of all earthly friends. God will be with them when their flesh and heart fails. God will be the strength of their heart, when they are weak and faint, and nature fails. God will put underneath his everlasting arms to support them, and will make all their bed for them in

their sickness. Psa. 37:37, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.”

II. Death is not only no death to them, but it is a translation to a more glorious life, and is turned into a kind of resurrection from the dead. Death is a happy change to them, and a change that is by far more like a resurrection than a death. It is a change from a state of perfect light, and holiness, and joy. When a saint dies, he awakes, as it were, out of sleep. This life is a dull, lifeless state. There is but a little spiritual life, and a great deal of deadness. There is but a little light, and a great deal of darkness. There is but a little sense, and a great deal of stupidity and senselessness. But when a godly man dies, all this deadness, and darkness, and stupidity, and senselessness are gone forever, and he enters immediately into a state of perfect life, and perfect light, and activity, and joyfulness. A man’s conversion is compared to a resurrection, because then a man rises from spiritual death. Eph. 2:1, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” But through spiritual life is then begun, yet there are great remains of spiritual death after this, and but little life. But when a godly man dies, he rises from all remains of spiritual death, and comes into a state of perfect life. This body is like a prison to the holy soul, it exceedingly clogs, and hinders, and cramps it in its spiritual exercises and comforts. But when a saint dies, the soul is released from this prison, this grave, and comes into a state of glorious freedom and happiness. So that death is not only deprived of his sting, but is made a servant to the saints, to bring them to Christ in heaven, who is their life. And their ground of comfort does not only last when they are going out of the world, but it is in some respects increased, for then their perfect happiness draws nigh. It is “far better” to depart and be with Christ, than to continue here. And when the saints are enabled to see their own happiness in death, they are enabled exceedingly to rejoice in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, and to triumph joyfully over the king of terrors. Death to the saints is always a passage or avenue, leading out of a world of vanity, and sin, and misery, into a world of life, light, and glory. But though often a dark avenue, it is at times full of light, the darkness all vanishes away, and the light shines out of that glorious city into which they are entering. It shines through the darkness and fills the soul, and the clouds of death vanish before it.

The awful appearance of death is but a mask or disguise that death wears. It is not terrible but joyful in reality, and this light of the new Jerusalem sometimes so clearly shines, that it shines through the frightful disguise, and shows the saints that death is but a servant. Yea, sometimes it is so when death has on its most terrible disguise that ever it wears, and comes in its most dreadful forms, as when the saints are burnt at the stake, and put to all cruel and tormenting deaths. It is often times joyful to the saints when dying, to think that they are now going into the glorious presence of God, to enjoy God and Christ to the full. The joyful expectation sometimes makes them ready to cry out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

Thirdly, let us next consider the happiness of the saints, in their state of separation from the body.

I. When the soul departs from the body, it is received by the blessed angels and conducted by them to the third heavens. On the eve of its departure there is a guard if angels standing round the dying bed; and the devils, though eager to seize upon it as their prey, shall by no means be suffered to come nigh. The holy angels shall be a guard to the soul, to keep off al its enemies. We are taught that this is part of the office in which God employs them. Psa. 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Psa. 91:11, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways;" as it was with Daniel in the lion's den. Dan. 6:22, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." And as soon as the soul is loose from the body, it shall be kindly and courteously received by those bright and blessed ones, to be conducted by them in to Christ's glorious presence. For the angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be the heir of salvation. This is one way in which they shall minister; *viz.* to guard and conduct the departed spirits of the saints; which we are plainly taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16:22, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried." These spirits of holiness and love, when they have received the soul, shall conduct it

along through the aerial and starry heavens to the most glorious part of the universe; the highest part of the creation, the place of God's most holy residence, the city and palace of the most high God, where Christ is. There are some who say that there is no such place as heaven; but this is evidently a mistake, for the heaven into which the man Christ Jesus entered with his glorified body, is certainly some place. It is absurd to suppose that the heaven where the body of Christ is, is not a place. To say that the body of Christ is in no place, is the same thing as to say he has no body. The heaven where Christ is, is a place; for he was seen ascending, and will be seen descending again; and the heaven were the departed souls of the saints are, is the same heaven where Christ has ascended. And therefore Stephen, when he was departing this life, saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. And he prayed to that same Jesus who he saw, that he would receive his spirit; *i.e.* that he would receive it to him, where he was him, at the right hand of God. And the apostle Paul signifies, that if he should depart, he should be with Christ. Phil. 1:23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better:" 2 Cor. 5:8, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Besides, there are some of the saints there already with their bodies, as Enoch and Elijah. Therefore there is some place, where God gloriously manifests himself, and were Christ is, and were saints and angels dwell, and whither the angels carry the souls of the saints when they depart from their bodies; and this place is called Paradise, and the third heaven. 2 Cor. 12:2, 4. The aerial heaven is the first heaven; the starry heaven is the second; and the blessed abode of Christ and saints and angels the third, because it is above the other two; and so Christ is said to be made higher than the heavens. Heb. 7:26, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," *i.e.* higher than the visible heaven. This heaven is far above the stars. So it is said that Christ ascended far above all heavens. Eph. 4:10, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," *i.e.* far above all the heaven that we see. This is the mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and hither the angels conduct the souls of the saints when they leave their earthly tabernacles. When they come there, they shall be received with a joyful welcome, the

doors of this glorious city are opened to them, and they shall have entrance given to them into heaven, as an inheritance to which they have a right. Rev. 22:14, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” And then shall open to view that glorious world, that beautiful city, and delightful paradise, which they had often before heard of, and thought of, and desired. Then they shall see it, and possess it as their own. There they shall be welcomed and joyfully received by that glorious company that dwell there, by the angels, and by the saints that went to heaven before them. There was joy among them at their conversion, and now also will there be joy among them when they are brought home to glory. To have one that was dear to them before, because a child of the same family and a disciple of the same Lord, brought home from a strange country to come and dwell with them forever; how will their fellow citizens and brethren in heaven be glad for them, and rejoice with them, and embrace them, when they come there to join them in their praises of God and the Lamb! And then they shall be conducted unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory, and shall be presented to him perfectly free from sin, and without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; who will also abundantly welcome them to his glory, and to the blessed enjoying of his love. And then shall their good Shepherd rejoice, when he shall not only have brought home the soul that was lost to a saving close with him, but home to him in his heavenly Father’s house. The Savior shall then rejoice when he shall receive a soul that he loved before the foundation of the world; and for which he laid down his life, and endured such dreadful sufferings. This was the joy that was set before him, to redeem and make happy the souls of his elect; and he will rejoice, therefore, when he sees this accomplished. He will bid them welcome, and make them welcome, and they shall be received into the full enjoyment of his love. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and he shall present them also to God his Father, having redeemed them to him by his blood, who shall also abundantly welcome them there. Then the soul shall behold that glory and taste that pleasure which it long hoped for, and thought of with delight, and the thoughts of which were wont to be such a support to it when on earth. Then shall it know by experience what the joys of heaven are; then shall the great and precious promises of the gospel to fulfilled; then shall faith be turned into

vision, and hope into fruition; then shall all sin be eternally left behind. There shall be no more indwelling corruption, wicked thoughts, or sinful dispositions, to torment them. And whatever sorrow and affliction they underwent on earth, God shall now wipe away all tears from their eyes; and though they have lately passed through death, yet there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, because the former things shall be passed away. Rev. 21:4. If they have lived hardly in this world, and suffered hunger and thirst, there shall be an end of it all; and they that have suffered persecution, and have had their raiment stained with their own blood, shall now suffer no more. "And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, not any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:14, 15, 16, 17. Though they had many enemies to conflict with while on earth, yet now shall they obtain the victory over them; now shall they triumph and sing, being forever out of the reach of all Satan's temptations, and of all his power to afflict or molest them. Now shall they appear in mount Zion with the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. Rev. 7:9.

II. They shall remain there in a state of exceeding glory and blessedness, till the resurrection. They shall remain there in the enjoyment of God, dwelling with Jesus Christ in a state of perfect rest, without the least disturbance or molestation. Rev. 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." There they shall dwell in habitations of sweet delight and pleasure in paradise; there they shall drink of those rivers of pleasures for evermore. There they shall dwell in perfect light and perfect love. There they shall see and converse with God and Christ, and with angels and glorious spirits, and shall contemplate the wonderful love of God to men in sending his only Son. There shall they contemplate

the glorious love of God to them, the love he had to them before the foundation of the world. There shall they see and know what love Christ had to them, that influenced him to lay down his life for them; and shall behold the beauty and excellency of Christ, and see face to face, and know even as they are known. 1 Cor. 13:12. There they shall sweetly meditate on the wonderful dealings of God to them while in this lower world, in preserving of them, in granting to them to live under means of grace, when many thousands and millions of others never had these privileges. They shall contemplate the wonderful mercy of God to them in striving with them by his Spirit, in convincing them of sin, in stirring them up to seek salvation, in converting them, and in bringing them out of darkness into marvelous light. The mercy and grace of God in converting them will then appear otherwise to them than it does now. They shall then contemplate the manifold mercies of God to them through the whole course of their lives. They shall see how God has protected them, and guided them by his counsel, and led them all along. They shall see the wonderful wisdom and mercy of God towards them in these and those dispensations, that now appear most dark to them, shall see the meaning of those that were matter of difficulty to them, and shall see how all things wrought together for their good. These will be sweet meditations to them, and doubtless will be subjects of the saints' conversation with each other. How sweet will it be for the saints to look back and see how God carried them along through the wilderness, through all the storms of this world, and all its dangers, and temptations, and enemies, after they have come to their resting-place; and how sweet will it be for them to converse together of these things, and what ardent praises will it occasion! And then also shall they see the wisdom of God in the government and ordering of the affairs of his church all along, the scheme of divine providence shall be opened to them, and the admirable wisdom of it shall be unfolded; and they shall also see how God brings his purposes and promises to pass in his providence towards his church here on earth. They shall see and rejoice at it when the kingdom of God flourishes in the world. We are told, there is joy in heaven if but one sinner repenteth. Then doubtless the saints of the Old Testament after their entrance into heaven, saw and rejoiced when Christ came into the world. And therefore two of them, Moses and Elijah, came down to converse with Christ, at his transfiguration. Abraham, Moses, and David, and the prophets Isaiah and

Daniel, and all the prophets, doubtless saw the fulfillment of the glorious things foretold in their prophecies with exceeding rejoicing. They saw that glorious enlargement of the church that was produced by the preaching of the prophets. And thus also the apostles and evangelists in heaven, and other primitive Christians and martyrs, saw the glorious flourishing and prevailing of the kingdom of Christ after their death, till the utter downfall of heathenism, and the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman empire.

The holy martyrs with joy beheld the destruction of those pagan powers that persecuted the church of God. Rev. 6:9, 10, 11, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Therefore they rejoiced when they saw it accomplished. And so the saints that died in former ages, they without doubt beheld and rejoiced greatly at the time of the resurrection from popery in the days of Luther and Calvin, and other reformers. And so doubtless the saints that went to heaven, before this remarkable outpouring of the Spirit on this town and other neighboring towns, especially those that went to heaven from hence, have seen this work and greatly rejoiced at it. And so the saints, that die before the glorious days that are coming at the downfall of antichrist and the calling of the Jews, will rejoice at the conversion of the world to Christianity. We are ready to lament that we shall not probably live to see those times. But if we die and go to heaven, we shall see them nevertheless, and rejoice in them not the less for not being in this world. But we shall rejoice more, for we shall see and understand more of the glory of God in such a work, and have more love to God, and therefore shall rejoice more at the advancement of his kingdom. Thus when the apostle John had visions of the glorious things that should be brought to pass for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he from time to time mentions the visions he also had of the hosts of heaven rejoicing at it. Rev. 11:15, 16, 17, "And the seventh

angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." So when the spiritual Babylon, the church of Rome, falls, the holy apostles and prophets, though dead many ages before, are called upon to rejoice. Rev. 18:20, "Rejoice over her, thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." So the multitude of the heavenly hosts are described as rejoicing, and as singing hallelujahs on that occasions; and all heaven is full of praise. Rev. 19:1 "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hast avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke went up forever and ever." These things may give us some notion how the spirits of just men made perfect do employ themselves.

III. They remain in a joyful expectation of their more full and complete blessedness at the resurrection. As the wicked have not their full punishment until after the resurrection, so neither have the saints their complete happiness. Though they have attained to such exceeding glory, yet they are not yet arrived at its highest degrees, for that is reserved for their final state. The reward which the saints receive after the resurrection, is often spoken of as their chief reward. This is the reward that Christ has promised. John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." This is the chief reward that the saints seek and wait for. Rom. 8:23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan earnestly within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," Phil. 3:11, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." "Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance,

that they might obtain a better resurrection." So the happiness, that shall be given at Christ's second coming, is spoken of as the principal happiness. Tit. 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

This the saints will be in joyful expectation of in heaven; they shall; rest in sweet repose on God's promise that it shall be so, their desires of it bringing no uneasiness; they rejoicing in it most in the consideration that it will be in God's time, in the fittest and best time.

Fourthly, I shall consider the glory, honor, and peace, which the godly shall receive at the resurrection and the day of judgment.

I. When the time appointed comes, notice shall be given of it in heaven, which will be to their exceeding joy. God has in his own eternal counsels fixed the time, but now it is kept secret. It is not only not known by any on the earth, but neither is it known in heaven by either saints or angels there, and the man Christ Jesus himself, in his state of humiliation, did not himself know it. Mat. 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no not and angels in heaven have a joyful expectation of it, but they know not when it is; but when the time comes, God's eternal counsels concerning it shall be made known; the joyful tidings shall be proclaimed through all heaven, that all may prepare to attend the Lord Jesus Christ in his descent to the earth.

II. They shall descend with Christ from the highest heaven towards the earth. When notice is given to the heavenly host, they shall all gather themselves together to attend on this most joyful and glorious occasion; and then the glorious Son of God shall descend, and the holy angels with him, and not only the angels, but the souls of the saints, shall come with Christ. 1 Thes. 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Christ shall descend with the glory of his Father; he shall appear in a glory becoming the Supreme Lord and Judge of heaven and earth. Now heaven will for a time be left empty of its inhabitants; those glorious and blessed abodes will be deserted by those that dwelt there, to attend the judge of the world.

III. The saints on earth shall behold this glorious sight of their Savior coming in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels with him. The first notice that shall be given of this descent shall be in heaven, but soon after there shall be notice of it on earth. Christ shall be seen coming while he is yet at a great distance; every eye shall see him of both good and bad. And it will be the most joyful sight to the saints that ever they saw. The first notice of it will cause their hearts to overflow with joy and gladness, it will fill the hearts of the godly as full of joy as it will the wicked with terror and amazement. If the saints are then waked out of their sleep at midnight with this sound, that Christ appears in the clouds of heaven coming to judgment, it will be joyful news to them. It is probable many of the saints at that time will be found suffering persecution, for there are several things in Scripture which seem to declare, that the time when Christ is coming shall be a time when wickedness shall exceedingly abound, and the saints shall be greatly persecuted. But this shall set them at liberty; then they may lift up their heads out of prisons and dungeons, and many out of galleys, and mines, and shall see their Redeemer drawing nigh. This sight will drive away their persecutors, it will put an end to all their cruelties, and set God's people at liberty. And then when all the kindreds of the earth shall wail at the sight of Christ in the clouds of heaven, and wicked men everywhere shall be shrieking and crying with terrible amazement, the saints shall be filled with praise and transport. We read that, when Christ ascended into heaven, the disciples stood steadfastly looking on as he went up. But the saints then on earth shall view Christ with more steadfastness as he descends in his heavenly and exceeding glory. They shall feed and feast their eyes with this majestic sight, beholding in what solemn and glorious pomp their own blessed Redeemer descends. This sight shall put a final end to all sorrow, and their everlasting joy and glory will commence from it. The hope of the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, is said to be a blessed hope. Tit. 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." But when it comes it will be a more blessed sight.

IV. The dead in Christ shall arise at the sound of the last trumpet with glorified bodies, and the living saints shall see them. The holy and blessed souls of saints that descended from heaven with Christ, shall then be

reunited to those bodies that shall be prepared by infinite wisdom and skill to be fit organs for a holy and happy soul. The body shall not rise as it was before; there shall be a vast difference in it. 1 Cor. 15:42, 43, 44, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The glory of that body, that the saints shall rise with is what we now cannot conceive of. It shall not be such a dull and heavy-molded thing as it is now. It shall be active and vigorous as a flame of fire fit for the use of a glorified soul. It will be no clog or hindrance to the soul as it is now, but an organ every way fit for the use of a glorious spirit. It shall not be weak, infirm, and frail as it is now; for, though it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. Now the body is in need of food and sleep continually, to recreate it, but it shall not be so then. Now the body is subject to weariness, and to diseases, but it shall not be so then. Now if God lets in any great matter of divine light into the soul, the body is ready to sink under it, but it shall not be so then. The glorified body of the saints shall not then fail or flag at all by the most powerful exercises of mind. Now not many can see God and live, but the body shall not fail at all by the immediate beholding of God. Now the saints can see but little. When God a little reveals himself, as he doth at times, the saints are forced to beseech God either to strengthen them to see it, or to stay his hand. But then the body shall be so vigorous and spiritual, that the constant and everlasting view of the glory of God shall not in any wise overcome it, or cause it in the least to fail.

The body shall not only be raised in an exceeding strength, but in wonderful beauty, for we are told that their bodies shall be like to Christ's glorious body. The greatest beauty that ever any human body appeared in this world, is vile and base in comparison. The beauty of the bodies of the saints shall not only consist in the most lovely proportion of the features of their countenance and parts of their bodies, but in a semblance of the excellencies of their minds, which will appear exceedingly in their countenance. Their air and mien will be such as will naturally result from the wisdom, purity, and love of the soul, and shall denote and hold forth an inexpressible sweetness, benevolence, and complacence. And if I may speak what appears to me probable, and what seems to be authorized by

the Scriptures, their bodies shall be as it were clothed with garments of light. The prophet Daniel, speaking of the resurrection, says, Dan. 12:2, 3, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And Christ, speaking of the end of the world, says, Mat. 13:43, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And there is nothing to hinder our understanding this literally of their bodies, and especially when this shining of the saints is spoken of from time to time as what shall be at the resurrection, and not of their souls in a separate state. Moses's face shone when he had been conversing with God in the mount. Much more may it be expected that the bodies of the saints shall shine, when they shall converse a thousand times more intimately with God, not in mount Sinai, but in heaven. We read of Christ, that when his body was transfigured, to teach us what the body of Christ should be in its glorified state, we are told that, when his body was transfigured, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Mat. 17:2. But we are told that the bodies of the saints shall be made like unto Christ's glorious body. There therefore seems to be much ground to think, that at the resurrection the bodies of the saints shall shine with a glorious light, and that they shall be as it were clothed with light. Thus the departed saints shall arise with glorious bodies, they shall lift up their heads out of their graves with joyful and glorious countenances. And at the same time the bodies of the living shall in a moment be changed into the same strength, and activity, and incorruptibility, and beauty and glory, with which those that were dead shall arise. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, 53, "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound); and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

V. Then all the saints shall mount up, as with wings, to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with him. After the dead in Christ are risen, and the living saints changed, then they will be prepared to go to Christ, and to meet the bridegroom. The world will be about to be destroyed, and the

wicked shall be in dreadful amazement, but the saints shall be delivered. Dan. 12:1, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” They shall take an everlasting farewell of this evil world where there is so much sin, and where they have met with so much trouble, and they shall be caught up in the clouds, and there they shall meet their glorious Redeemer; and a joyful meeting it will be. They shall go to Christ, never any more to be separated from him. 1 Thes. 4:16, 17, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

VI. Then shall the good works, which the saints have done, be declared to their peace and glory. We are often told that every man shall be judged according to his works, and Christ keeps a book of remembrance of the good works of the saints as well as of the sins of the ungodly. And however mean and polluted that which the saints do is in itself, yet all the pollution that attends it is hid, and everything they do for God that has the least sincerity in it is precious in God’s eyes. Through his infinite grace it shall in no wise lose its reward, neither shall it in any wise lose its honor. At the day of judgment they shall receive praise and glory in reward for it. Christ will declare all the good they have done to their honor; what they did secretly and the world knew it not, and when they did not let their left hand know what their right had did. Then shall they receive praise and honor for all their labor, for all their self-denial, and all their suffering in the cause of Christ; and those good works of theirs that were despised, and for which they were condemned, and suffered reproach, shall now be set in a true light. And however they were reproached and slandered by men, they shall receive praise of God in the sight of angels and men. 1 Cor. 4:5, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.” Those righteous men that have been

condemned here before unjust judges, shall be acquitted and honored then before the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. Heb. 6:10, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Then will be the time when their Lord and Master will say unto them, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” Thus, in the description of the day of judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew, Christ rehearses the good works of the saints. “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” And though the saints there reply, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” Though they thought that nothing that they had done was worthy to be so accounted of as it was by Christ, yet Christ of his grace esteemed it highly, and highly honored them for it, as it there follows, 40th verse, “And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” And if the sins of the saints shall be rehearsed, it shall not be for their shame, but for the glory of divine grace, to give opportunity to them to plead the atonement of that Savior who will be the Judge, to give occasion to them to produce Christ’s righteousness, which will surely be accepted by himself.

VII. The saints shall sit on thrones with Christ, to judge wicked men and devils. Christ will put that honor upon them on that day, he will cause them to sit on his right hand as judges with him, and so the saints shall judge the world. Mat. 19:28, “And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” They shall judge kings and princes who were their persecutors, and the devils who were their tempters.

VIII. At the finishing of the judgment Christ shall pronounce the blessed sentence upon them, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

This blessed sentence Christ shall pronounce on them with inexpressible manifestations of grace and love. Every word of it will be ravishing to them and will cause raptures of joy in their hearts; that this glorious person, though he orders with such indignation the wicked to depart from him, yet will so sweetly invite them to come with him, and that he should accost them after such a manner, saying, “ye blessed of my Father.” Christ will pronounce them blessed in the sight of men and angels; and blessed indeed, because blessed by his Father. There will not only be a manifestation of Christ’s love to them in this sentence, but a declaration of the Father’s love, for they are declared to be blessed of him. Christ shall invite them to come with him, and for no less a purpose than to inherit a kingdom. Christ gives them a glorious kingdom. The wealth to which he invites them is the wealth of a kingdom; and the honor he gives them is the honor of kings. And what yet adds to the blessedness is this, that it is a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. God loved them from all eternity, and therefore he has prepared a kingdom for them. God had respect to them in the creation of the world, and then prepared this glorious kingdom for them, and out of love to them. They have therefore a right to it, and now therefore they are invited to come to possess it; and not only to possess it, but to *inherit* it, that is, to posses it as *heirs*, as those that have a right to the kingdom by virtue of their being his children.

Thus having considered what glory, honor, and peace the saints have in this life, at death, in a separate state, and at the day of judgment, I now proceed,

Fifthly, To consider their consummate state of happiness after the day of judgment. And here I would consider,

I. Their entrance into this happiness; and

II. Its nature, its degree, and some of the circumstances which attend it.

I. Their entrance into this state of consummate happiness.

1st. When the judgment is ended they shall ascend with Christ in a triumphant and glorious manner into heaven. Christ, when he has passed sentence, shall then return again. He shall pass beyond these aerial heavens, and shall ascend towards the highest heaven, together with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of glorious spirits, and of the saints with their glorified bodies. They shall leave this lower world, and all the wicked, to be burnt in everlasting fire, and as they are ascending shall look back and see it all in one vast conflagration. Then shall be fulfilled in the most remarkable manner, the prophecy in Psa. 47:4, 5, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved. God is gone up with a shout, the lord with the sound of a trumpet." And that will be the most joyful procession that ever will be seen. And when they are come to heaven they shall enter in with joy into that new Jerusalem where they are to dwell forever; and this will be the most joyful day that ever was in heaven. It is probable, that when Christ ascended into heaven after his death and resurrection, it was the most joyful day in heaven that ever had been seen till them. But this second ascension will be a more glorious and joyful day than that.

2nd. When they have come to heaven, they shall be there actually instated by God and Christ in their ultimate and consummate happiness; and now they shall have complete redemption. To illustrate this, it may be observed,

1. They shall be perfectly happy in the whole man; both body and soul. Before, their souls only were happy, while the body lay in a state of putrefaction in the grave. Now they shall be in that state which is natural to the human soul., which is a state of union with the body. It is natural for the soul to act by a body, and to make use of such an organ, and the soul is not complete without the body. And then both body and soul shall be glorified together.

2. Then will the body of Christ be perfect and complete. Then it shall have all its members, no one wanting. Now the body of Christ is incomplete, there are many members wanting; but then it will be perfected, having every member. Now the body of Christ is in a growing state, but then it

shall have come to its perfect state, to receive no more addition. Then the body of Christ shall be perfect, not only as it shall have every member, but every member shall be in its perfect state. Now as there are many of the members of Christ's body wanting, so there are many that are imperfect. Many that are engrafted into Christ have great infirmity, and great remains of corruption, and many of his members are now under affliction. But then every member shall be perfectly freed from all sin and sorrow, and there never will be any more either sin or sorrow, in any member of the body of Christ. Then also the body of Christ will be complete, because those that are brought to a perfect state are wholly brought home. Before only the soul was brought home to glory, while the body that was also to be united to Christ, lay in the grave. The body of Christ will then also be in its complete state, because then all the parts will be together; and this is one end of Christ's coming into the world, *viz.* that he might gather together all in one. Eph. 1:16. Before they were scattered, some in heaven and some on earth, some mixed with wicked men, as wheat with tares, and as lilies among thorns. The church, therefore, now being made complete, will exceedingly rejoice. And Christ, having his mystical body complete, will rejoice in the completeness of his church, and the church will rejoice in its own completeness.

3. Then will the Mediator have fully accomplished the work for which he came into the world. Then will he have perfected the work of redemption, not only in the impetration, but also in the application of it. Then all that God has given him will be actually and fully redeemed, their bodies as well as souls. Then will he have conquered all his enemies, and will triumph over them all. Then he will have put down all authority and power. 1 Cor. 15:21, 22, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Then Christ will surely have obtained that joy that was set before him. Then he shall have perfected the full design that was upon his heart from all eternity. And then Christ will rejoice, and all his members must rejoice

with him. Christ shall triumph over his enemies, and the saints shall then triumph over all their enemies, and the joys of the triumph shall last forever.

4. Then God will have obtained the end of all his great works which he has been doing from the beginning of the world. Then will be the consummation of all thing. The deep designs of God will be unfolded, his marvelous contrivances, and his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works, will appear. The end being obtained, as all things are from God, so will they then all be to him, and will issue in his glory. His power appeared in the beginning of them, and his glory will be manifested in the end and consummation of them. Then will it be seen that all the revolutions and changes which have existed from the beginning of the world are for God's glory. Then it will appear how all the wheels of his providence have conspired together to bring about the glory of God and Christ, and the happiness of his people. And this will cause an exceeding accession of happiness to the saints who behold it. Then will God have fully glorified himself, and glorified his Son, and glorified his elect. Then he will see that all is very good, and will rejoice in his own works, which will be the joy of all heaven. Then will God rest and be refreshed, and thence forward will all the inhabitants of heaven keep an eternal Sabbath of rest and praise, such as never was kept before.

5. Then will be the marriage of the Lamb. When the church is completely purified and beautified, and nothing wanting, and all the parts of the body in their due proportion and joyful state. Then may the Lamb's wife be said to have made herself ready. Then will she be as a bride prepared for her husband. And when the church is thus prepared by Christ at such great cost, at the shedding of his own blood; it will be brought to a more glorious union to Christ than ever before, and to a more intimate communion with him, and to a more high enjoyment of his excellency and love. Then will be the highest accomplishment of the joy spoken of in Rev. 19:7, 8, 9, " Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come; and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of

the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." It will be the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; the feast, and pomp, and holy mirth, and joy of this marriage day, will be continued to all eternity.

6. Then will Christ present his church to his Father. The Father sent forth Christ into the world on that errand, to redeem a vast number of the children of men, and to bring them home to God, from whom they had apostatized, to bring them back to him, the great Creator and Father of all things, and the fountain of all good. Christ, having accomplished this, will bring them to God, and present them to him; and then may Christ say, as in Heb 2:13, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me;" none of them is missing; "of those that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing." We read that Christ, when he shall have accomplished the work which the Father sent him to do, shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." And as he shall deliver up the kingdom, he shall present the subjects of the kingdom; and what he has obtained by ruling, he shall present as the fruits of his reign.

7. Then will God make a still more abundant manifestation and communication of himself. God shall be all in all. And the glory of God and the glory of his Son shall be displayed in heaven, in a more abundant manner than ever before. And he will put forth more plentifully of his Spirit, and will make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, such as will be becoming the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and such as will become the joyful occasion of the marriage of the Lamb.

II. I shall now describe the nature and degree of the consummate and eternal glory and blessedness of the saints.

1st. The nature of this glory and blessedness.

1. I would begin with the lowest part of it, *viz.* the glory of the place. We have already observed that heaven is a place. They shall dwell in the most glorious part of the whole creation of God. It is called paradise. Luke

23:43, “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” 2 Cor. 12:4, “How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter.” Rev. 2:7, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” The word *paradise* signifies a most pleasant and delightful garden, of which the garden of Eden was a type. The garden of Eden was without doubt a place that was delightful beyond what we can easily conceive. But if this earthly paradise was so delightful, how pleasant and glorious may we conclude the heavenly paradise to be; that was not made merely top be the residence of some of the innocent creatures of God during their time of probation, as Eden was, but was prepared by infinite wisdom and skill for the everlasting dwelling-place of the great King of heaven and earth, and of his Son Jesus Christ; the place where they might show their glory, and wisdom, and love forever, and which is to be the habitation of confirmed saints and angels! When God made the universe, he made many parts of it for inferior uses, in which he displayed marvelous skill. Then he made the earth, and the sun, and moon, and stars, and the visible heavens, which appear truly glorious; but there was one part of the creation that God made more especially for himself, to be his own dwelling-place, the place of his glorious rest; and we may conclude that this is beyond all comparison more glorious than the other parts of it. If some parts of the visible world are so glorious, as the sun, moon, and stars how glorious may we conclude the highest heavens to be! This is the heavenly mount Zion, the royal city of the great God. It has been the ambition of earthly monarchs to make the cities where they dwell exceedingly magnificent. Thus the king of Babylon boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” Dan. 4:30. Especially will kings have their own palaces most magnificent. But if those earthly cities and palaces are some of them so glorious, which are for the habitation of worms, how glorious may we think that to be which is for the glorious habitation of God Almighty! As the third heavens are higher than the earth, so we may expect that it is proportionally more glorious than any earthly garden, city, or palace. Heaven is not only the city of God, but his palace; not only his palace, but his throne. Isa. 66:1, “Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my

throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me; and where is the place of my rest?" We read how magnificent was Solomon's throne. 1 Kin. 10:18, 19, 20, "Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best of gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom." But what is the throne of a glowworm? God does not want skill to make his palace and throne glorious enough to become the majesty and glory of him whose house and seat it is . The builder is God, and there is no want of skill in the architect. How glorious and magnificent was the temple of Solomon, that was built only to be the place of the special symbols of God's presence on earth among his people Israel! How much more glorious is that heavenly temple which God himself has built, to be the place of his glorious presence among glorified saints and angels throughout all eternity! This is a place contrived on purpose to show the boundless riches of God's grace and love. And therefore, God has not spared as to the delights and glories with which he has adorned the place. God is rich enough to make the place transcend all created glory. Earthly kings build their houses and palaces, and make them magnificent, according to their wealth and ability. But God is infinitely rich, he does not spare for the cost of the treasures to be laid out in adorning heaven, through fear of impoverishing himself. The glory of his residence is what we cannot conceive of; and this is one of those things spoken of in 1 Cor. 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hast prepared for them that love him." Therefore in the descriptions that are given of it in the Scriptures, the images made use of to shadow it forth to us, are the most glorious with which we are conversant in the world. Such is the glorious description of it by John, as represented to him in the apocalyptic vision. Rev. 21:10-23, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city was garnished with all

manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Heaven is here represented by a city whose very walls were made of precious stones. And the foundations were also all precious stones, and the gates were each a single pearl, and the very streets of the city were of pure gold; and yet it was something so excellent, as it appeared to John, that his comparing it to pure gold did not represent the excellency of it. It had also the beautiful transparency of clear glass. The apostle could find nothing on earth excellent enough adequately to represent its surpassing beauty. "The streets of the city were pure gold, like unto clear glass." He goes on with the destruction in the beginning of the next chapter. Rev. 22:1, 2-5, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. — And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." This glorious place shall be the residence of the saints forever. They shall dwell with him in their father's house; they shall dwell in this house, for it is Christ's house. He is the heir and owner of it, because he is the only-begotten Son of God; and the church shall dwell in it with Christ, because she is "the Lamb's wife." God has made heaven to be his won peculiar dwelling-place, and the dwelling-place of his children; when he made the world, he made heaven for them and therefore Christ says to them at the close of their trial, Mat. 25:34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

2. The glory of the bodies of the saints; but this need not be insisted on

here; as I have considered it already, when speaking of the resurrection. I would only observe, that however great the glory of the place is, the glory of their bodies will doubtless be far greater. For the place is made to be a dwelling-place for their glorious bodies, and the inhabitants will doubtless be more glorious than the habitation that is made for them; as the end is of greater value than the means. However bright heaven itself shall shine, the bodies of the saints themselves will shine far brighter, and appear far more beautiful.

3. The glory and beauty which God will put upon their souls, will as far exceed the beauty of their bodies, as the beauty of their bodies will far exceed the beauty of the place. Here will be their principal ornament, and if their bodies shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, how bright will their souls shine in the glorious image of God, made perfect in them! When they shall be presented to Christ, perfectly free from sin, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; then they shall appear holy and without blemish; their bodies shall not only be made like to Christ's glorious body, but their souls like to his holy and glorified soul. They shall then shine with the glory of Christ reflected from them without anything to obscure the bright image. Their souls shall be made glorious in wisdom and knowledge; their faculties shall be exceedingly strengthened and enlarged, their eyes made perfectly clear, and divine light shall fill the soul, so that there shall be no darkness within, and perfect love shall reign in the heart. Divine love shall be strong; all the soul shall be as it were love. This love shall be exceedingly great in the principle of it, and shall always be in its highest exercise. Then shall humility also be brought to perfection. None can now express or conceive how pure and holy will be the disposition of the soul of a glorified saint, which shall be, as it were, all love all sweetness, all humility. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is said to be in the sight of God of great price, in this world. But how precious will such spiritual ornaments be heaven, when they shall be thus perfected! The souls of the saints are God's jewels; and how bright will God make those his jewels shine in heaven, when he has polished them and fitted them to be gems in his own crown of glory! The soul of man, being spiritual and rational, is susceptible of incomparably greater beauty than the body, because the soul is capable of receiving the image of God, of which the body is not.

And the souls of the saints, when God has perfected them, shall appear as the very image of God himself; and in the graces in which they shall shine shall be seen the glory of the divine workmanship in its perfection. And so lovely will they be, that there will be more loveliness and beauty in the soul of one saint than in all the glory and beauty of the place put together.

4. They shall have great delight in the society and enjoyment of one another. We now do not know what enjoyment they will have in conversing together, and in communicating with each other; but doubtless it will be far more perfect than any we have now. The saints in heaven shall all be one society, they shall be united together without any schism, there shall be a sweet harmony, and a perfect union. There the saints shall see and converse with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and all the holy martyrs; and *they* shall freely converse with them. It will be a most blessed society. There shall be no jars or contentions, nor breaking out among them; no manner of strife, nor envy, nor jealousy; no ill will, but perfect peace and perfect love through the whole society. Each one shall love every other with a most endeared and strong affection. Each one will be perfectly excellent and lovely, and will appear so in every other's eyes. They will be delighted exceedingly in that lovely and perfect image of God, which each one shall see in every other. They shall manifest their love to each other in the most becoming and amiable manner, without anything ever to disturb or interrupt the peace of that blessed society. They shall manifest their love to each other in the most becoming and amiable manner, without anything ever to disturb or interrupt the peace of that blessed society. There shall be no mixture of wicked men among them as it is here in this world, to defile or dishonor their company. Here the visible churches of Christ are often defiled and dishonored by one wicked man or other, but that church above shall always be perfectly pure. Rev. 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This blessed family being all united in one body, as having many members, shall all subserve and contribute to each other's happiness, as the members of a body that is in perfect health. They shall delight to assist each other in their contemplations, communicating their glorious contemplations one to another. How sweetly will they converse

together of the glories of God and Christ, and of God's glorious works of power, and wisdom, and mercy! And how will they convey the bright conceptions and the raptures of joy from one soul to another, imparting to each other the sweet communications which they themselves receive from the glorious King of heaven! And how will they help one another in their praises to God and Christ, each one bearing his part in the heavenly melody, extolling the Most High! And what a glorious harmony of celestial voices without number will that be, when the whole assembly of the upper world shall together lift up the praises of God on high! John had this represented to him at a great distance, and tells us, Rev. 14:2, "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps:" So ardent were they, and so great a multitude. And how will they rejoice in their numbers, to see so great a multitude all united, all perfectly holy, all full of mutual love, all fellow-citizens, all brethren!

Here a question may arise, whether the saints, when they go to heaven, have any peculiar comfort in meeting with those who have been their pious friends on earth? I answer in the affirmative, and I think it is evident from 1 Thes. 4:13-18, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Here it is evident,

(1). That what the apostle mentions, as a matter of comfort to Christians respecting their departed Christian friends, is that they shall meet them, and see them again. It is not only that their departed friends, though dead, are happy, but they shall see them, and be with them again. This is here plainly asserted. Mourn not for them, says the apostle, as those that

have no hope; for when Christ comes, God shall bring them again, and we which are alive shall be caught up with them; and so shall we be ever with the Lord together. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. The apostle therefore must be understood to mean, that they should comfort one another when mourners, with the consideration that they should hereafter be with their departed friends again in a glorious and happy state, and never part more.

(2). That their will be something else that will give comfort in meeting them in a future state, than in seeing other saints. Otherwise why did the apostle mention it for their comfort, that they should see them again rather than other saints whom they had not seen or heard of? The apostle's speaking thus to the Thessalonians might give them just ground to expect, that the peculiarly strong affection which they had cherished for their departure, would be again gratified by meeting them again. For this crossing of that affection was the ground of their mourning. If the Thessalonians knew, that to see their friends again in another world would be no gratification to the affection which they had for them as their friends, and did no way think or conceive of it as such; then to think of seeing them would be no more comfort to them or remedy to their sorrow, than to think that they should see any other saint that lived or died in another country, or in a past age; and that, because it would be no remedy to the ground and foundation of their mourning, *viz.* the crossing their affection to them as their friends; and if it would be no remedy to their mourning, to think thus respecting it, it never would have been mentioned to them by the apostle as a ground of comfort, or reason why they need not mourn. That was what they mourned for *viz.* that they should not have their affections towards them satisfied by seeing them, and conversing with them again. That for which the heathen here spoken of, that have no hope, mourned excessively, was that they should never more have that affection gratified again. Hence it follows that the special affection, which the saints have in this world to other saints who are their friends, will in some respects remain in another world. There is no reason why we should suppose that saints that have dwelt together in this world, and have showed kindness to each other, have been affectionate to each other's true happiness, should not love one another with a love of gratitude for it in another world. There is no reason why good ministers

whom God had made the instruments of salvation to others, should not have special joy in meeting their converts in heaven. 2 Cor. 1:14, “As also ye have acknowledged us in part that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Thes. 2:19, 20, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” I see no reason why those that love one another with a virtuous love, and from such a love have shown kindness one to another, should not love one another the better for it in another world. There is no reason to think, that the friendship contracted here on earth between saints will be rooted out in another world. All natural affections, so far as founded in animal nature of the infirmity of the present state, will ceases in another world. And with respect to any affection that the godly have had to the finally reprobate, the love of God will wholly swallow it up, and cause it wholly to cease. But I see nothing that argues that one saint in glory may not have a special respect to another, because God made use of that other as an instrument to bring him into being, and thus made him the remote occasion of his happiness; or that, when pious parents lose pious children, they may not comfort themselves with the thought that they shall go to them, as probably David did when he said concerning his child, 2 Sam. 12:23, “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me:” Or that even a former acquaintance with persons and their virtues may not occasion a particular respect in another world. They may go to heaven with a desire to see them upon that very account. The impressions which they have of their amiable qualifications in consequence of their acquaintance with them here, may yet remain in another world.

5. The saints in heaven shall see and converse with Christ. They shall see Christ in a twofold sense.

(1). They shall see him, as appearing in his glorified human nature, with their bodily eyes; and this will be a most glorious sight. The loveliness of Christ as thus appearing will be a most ravishing thing to them; for though the bodies of the saints shall appear with an exceeding beauty and glory, yet the body of Christ will without doubt immensely surpass them, as much as the brightness of the sun does that of the stars. The glorified

body of Christ will be the masterpiece of all God's workmanship the whole material universe. There shall be in his glorious countenance the manifestations of his glorious spiritual perfections, his majesty, his holiness, his surpassing grace, and love, and meekness. The eye will never be wearied with beholding this glorious sight. When Christ was transfigured in the mount, Peter was for making three tabernacles, the Christ, and Moses, and Elijah might remain there, and that the heavenly vision might never come to an end.

Job had respect to this sight of Christ, and comforted himself with the thoughts of it, when he said, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." This will be the most glorious object that the saints will ever see with their bodily eyes. And there will be far more happiness redounding to the beholders from this sight than from any other; yea, the eyes of the glorified body will be given chiefly that the saints may behold this sight.

(2). They shall see him with the eye of the soul. It is said, "They shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2, "And they shall know even as they are known." 1 Cor. 13:12. They shall have a clear understanding of Christ as Mediator, how he has undertaken from all eternity to accomplish their salvation. They shall understand the glorious covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. [They] shall see the eternal love Christ had to them before the foundation of the world. They shall in all probability understand the mystery of his incarnation. They shall know and understand the gloriousness of the way of salvation by Christ, "which things the angels desire to look into." They shall have a full understanding of the infinite wisdom of God in contriving the plan of salvation. [They] shall comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ to sinners, in undergoing for them the agony of the garden, and the more overwhelming agonies of the cross. Now the heart is dull in the contemplation of such things. How often are they heard of by the saints on earth with but little affection! How often, when they see them set forth in the Lord's supper, are they cold and

lifeless! But then it shall not be so. Then the wonderful works of God, and the love of Christ in the work of redemption, will appear as they are. Then there will constantly without any interruption be a most lively and full sense of it, without any deadness or coldness. Everything in the work of redemption will appear in its true glory, the understanding shall be wonderfully opened, and it shall be perpetually like the clear hemisphere with the sun in the meridian, and there shall never come over one cloud to darken the mind. And then the saints shall see fully how the excellence and loveliness of Christ appear in all that he did and suffered. They shall see the liveliness of those excellencies that appeared in Christ's human nature when on earth; his wonderful meekness and humility, his patience under suffering, his perfect obedience to the Father. And then shall they also see the beauty that appears in Christ's human nature in its glorified state, wherein the excellencies of it shine without a veil. They shall also see the excellence of the divine nature of Christ. They shall behold clearly and immediately his divine majesty, and his divine and infinite holiness, and grace, and love. They shall see Christ as the perfect image of God, an image wherein all the glory of the divine nature is fully expressed. They shall behold him as the brightness of his Father's glory; and they shall see that bright and perfect image of God which the Father beheld, and was infinitely happy in beholding, from all eternity. But this sight of the glory of Christ in his divine nature belongs to that beatific vision, of which I would speak more particularly hereafter.

They shall not only see this glorious person, as at a distance, but they shall be admitted to be near him and to converse with him. This sight of his glory and loveliness will fill them with the most exalted love, which love will cause them to desire conversation; and they shall be admitted to it, to the full of their desires, and that at all times. Two things may be observed concerning this converse with Christ, to which the saints shall be admitted in heaven.

One, it shall be most free and intimate. There shall be nothing to forbid them or deter them. Though Christ is so glorious a person, in so exalted a state in heaven, being Lord of heaven and earth, yet he will treat them as brethren, and they shall converse with him a friends. He will also honor them and advance them to the dignity of kings, that they may be fit to

converse with so glorious a King. Rev. 1:6, “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.” Christ, when on earth, treated his disciples with great familiarity and freedom, he treated them as friends. John 15:15, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I call you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” So in heaven he will not keep them at a greater distance, but admit them nearer; because they shall be fitted to be nearer to him and to converse more intimately with him. O how happy will it render them to have so great and honorable a person treating them with such grace and condescension!

Though they shall see the awful majesty of Christ, that will not make them afraid, because they will see his love, and grace, and condescension, equal to his majesty.

Two, this converse shall be most full and satisfying. This is evident from that most emphatic expression of the church being “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” He will open the infinite and eternal fountain of his love to them, and will pour forth that fountain into their hearts. This love will be as a pure river of water of life, a river of pleasures, constantly flowing into the souls of the saints, that shall be in them as rivers of living water. And they shall also in their converse with Christ manifest their love to him. Their hearts shall flow out in an unceasing stream, or ascend continually in a rapturous transport of love. Of those things we can say but little now; yet sometimes when God helps us we can conceive of them a little, but it is but a little at the most.

6. The saints in heaven shall see God. They shall not only see that glorious city, and the saints there, and the holy angels, and the glorified body of Christ; but they shall see God himself. This is promised to the saints. Mat. 5:8, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” 1 Cor. 13:12, “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am know.” This is that which is called by divines, “the beatific vision,” because this is that in which the blessedness of the saints in glory does chiefly consist. This is the fountain, the infinite fountain of their blessedness. The sight of Christ, which has already been spoken of, is not here to be excluded, for

he is a divine person; the sight of him in his divine nature therefore belongs to the beatifical vision. This vision of God is the chief bless of heaven, and therefore I would speak of it a little more particularly. And,

(1). As to the faculty that is the subject of this vision. It is no sight of anything with the bodily eyes; but is an intellectual view. The beatific vision of God is no a sight with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the soul. There is no such thing as seeing God properly with the bodily eyes, because he is a spirit. One of his attributes is that he is invisible. 1 Tim. 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever." Col. 1:15, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Heb. 11:27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." This highest blessedness of the soul does not enter in at the door of the bodily senses. This would be to make the blessedness of the soul dependent on the body, or the happiness of man's superior part to be dependent on the inferior. The beatific vision of God is not any sight with the bodily eyes, because the separate souls of the saints, and the angels which are mere spirits, and never were united to body, have this vision. Mat. 18:10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." It is not in beholding any form or visible representation, or shape, or color, or shining light, in which the highest happiness of the soul consists; but it is in seeing God, who is a spirit, spiritually, with the eyes of the soul. We have no reason to think that there is any such thing as God's manifesting himself by any outward glorious appearance, that is, the symbol of his presence in heaven, any otherwise than by the glorified body of Christ. God was wont in the Old Testament, oftentimes to manifest himself by an outward glory, and sometimes in an outward shape, or the form of a man. But when God manifested himself thus, it was by Christ. It was the second person of the Trinity only that was wont thus to appear to men in an outward glory and human shape. John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." But since Christ has actually assumed a human body, there is no need of his assuming any aerial form or shape anymore. The Deity now became visible to the bodily eyes in a more perfect manner by

his having a real body. The saints that shall see Christ in heaven in his glorified body, much more properly see Christ than if they only saw an assumed shape, or some outward glorious appearance, as the symbol of his presence. For now, that which they see is not only a glorious appearance by which Christ is represented, but the real Christ; it is his own body. The seeing God in the glorified body of Christ, is the most perfect way of seeing God with the bodily eyes that can be. For in seeing a real body, which one of the persons of the Trinity has assumed to be his body, and in which he dwells forever as his own, the divine majesty and excellency appear as much as it is possible for them to appear in outward form or shape. The saints do actually see a divine person with bodily eyes, and in the same manner as we see one another. But when God showed himself under outward appearances and symbols of his presence only, that was not so proper a sight of a divine person, and it was a more imperfect way of God's manifesting himself, suitably to the more imperfect state of the church under the Old Testament. But now Christ really subsists in a glorified body. Those outward symbols and appearances are done away, as being needless and imperfect. This more imperfect way therefore is altogether needless, seeing Christ there appears as a glorified body.

This seems to be one end of God's assuming a human body, *viz.* that the saints might see God with bodily eyes; that they may see him, not only in the understanding, but in every way of seeing of which the human nature is capable; that we might see God as a divine person as we see one another. And there is no need of God the Father's manifesting himself in any other glorious form; for he that sees the Son, sees the Father, John 14:9. And that because he is the image of the invisible God. Col. 1:15. — Heb. 1:3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." But if there be any outward symbol by which God the Father represents himself in heaven; seeing that is not the beatific vision, for that is a far more imperfect way of seeing God than seeing him with the eye of the soul. The soul is capable of apprehending God in a thousand times more perfect and glorious manner than the eye of the body is. The soul has in itself those powers whereby it is sufficiently capable of

apprehending spiritual objects without looking through the windows of the outward senses. The soul is capable of seeing God more immediately, and more certainly, and more fully and gloriously, than the eye of the body is.

(2). The act of vision. And,

One, it will be an immediate sight, it will be no apprehension of God's excellency by acquiring it from his works. Neither will it be such a spiritual sight of God as the saints have in this world, seeing him in his word and making use of his ordinances, which is called seeing "through a glass darkly." Then they shall see him "face to face." 1 Cor. 13:12. They shall not only see the glory of God as reflected from other things, but they shall see him as we see the sun, by his own light in a clear hemisphere. It will be an intuitive view of God. What knowledge the saints have of God in this world is like the twilight before sun-rising; it is not the direct light of the sun, but the light of the sun reflected, and it is comparatively a dim light. But hereafter the saints shall enjoy the perfect day, they shall see God as we immediately behold the sun after it is risen above the horizon, and no cloud or vapor in the heavens to hinder its sight.

Two, it shall be, according to men's capacity, a perfect sight. It shall not be a perfectly comprehensive sight, because it is impossible that a saint's mind should comprehend God; but yet it shall be perfect in its kind, it shall be perfectly certain, without any doubt or possibility of doubt. There shall be a view of God in his being, and in his power, and wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, and love, and all-sufficiency, that shall be attended with intuitive certainty, without any mixture of unbelief, and with much greater certainty than any sight with the bodily eye. And then it shall be perfectly clear without any view of darkness. Now, how much darkness is there mingled with that spiritual sight, which the saints have of God's glory in this world! But then, there shall be no obscurity, nothing to cloud the understanding, or to hinder the clearness of the view. God shall be hid with no veil, neither shall there be any veil in the heavens. And this sight shall be most enlarged. They shall see vastly more of the glory of God than any of the saints do in this world; the souls of the saints shall be like the angels in extensiveness of understanding.

(3). The object of this vision: concerning which I observe,

One, they shall see everything in God that tends to excite and inflame love, *i. e.* everything that is lovely, everything that tends to exalt their esteem and admiration, to warm and endear the heart. They shall behold the infinite excellency and glory of God, shall have a blessed-making sight of his glorious majesty and of his infinite holiness; shall see as those angels do, of whom we read in Isa. 6:3, "That, standing before the throne, they cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," and shall behold the infinite grace and goodness of God. Then shall that glorious fountain and ocean be opened fully to their view. Then shall they behold all its excellency and loveliness, they shall have a clear sight of his immense glory and excellency.

Two, they shall see everything in God that gratifies love. They shall see in him all that love desires. Love desires the love of the beloved. So the saints in glory shall see God's transcendent love to them. God will make ineffable manifestations of his love to them. They shall see as much love in God towards them as they desire. They neither will nor can crave any more. This very manifestation that God will make of himself that will cause the beatific vision, will be an act of love in God. It will be from the exceeding love of God to them that he will give them this vision, which will add an immense sweetness to it. When they see God so glorious, and at the same time see how greatly this God loves them, what delight will it not cause in the soul! Love desires union. They shall therefore see this glorious God united to them, and see themselves united to him. They shall see that he is their Father, and that they are his children. They shall see God gloriously present with them; God with them; and God in them; and they in God. Love desires the possession of its object. Therefore they shall see God, even their own God. When they behold this transcendent glory of God, they shall see him as their own. When they shall see that glory, power, and wisdom of God, they shall see it as altogether engaged for them. When they shall see the beauty of God's holiness, they shall see it as their own, for them to enjoy forever. When they see the boundless ocean of God's goodness and grace, they shall see it to be all theirs.

(4). The manner in which they shall see and enjoy God; and that is as having communion with Christ therein. The saints shall enjoy God, as

partaking with Christ of his enjoyment of God; for they are united to him, and are glorified and made happy in the enjoyment of God as his members. As the members of the body partake of the life and health of the head, so the saints in glory shall be happy as partaking of the blessedness of the Son of God. They being in Christ, shall partake of the love of God the Father to Christ. And as the Son knows the Father, so they shall partake with him in his sight of God, as being as it were parts of him. As he is in the bosom of the Father, so are they in the bosom of the Father. As he has immense joy in the love of the Father, so have they, every one of them in their measure, the same joy in the Father's love.

Herein they shall enjoy God in a more exalted and excellent manner than man would have done if he had never fallen; for doubtless that happiness, that Christ himself partakes of in his Father's bosom, is transcendently sweet and excellent. And how happy therefore are they who are admitted to partake of that portion of delight with him!

(5). The agent by whom this vision of God shall be communicated; *viz.* the Holy Spirit. As it is by the Holy Spirit that a spiritual sight of God is given in this world, so it is the same Holy Spirit by whom the beatific vision is given of God in heaven. The saints in heaven are as dependent on God for all their happiness, and all their holiness, and all their light, as those on earth. There all is from God by his Holy Spirit, just as it is here. they shall have the beatific vision of God because they will be full of God, filled with the Holy spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is the pure river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, spoken of in Rev. 22:1.

(6). The effects of this vision. And these are, that the soul shall be inflamed with love, and satisfied with pleasure.

One, it shall be inflamed with love. The soul shall not be an inactive spectator, but shall be most active, and in the most ardent exercise of love towards the object seen. The soul shall be as it were all eyes to behold, and yet all act to love. The soul shall be as full of love as it shall be of light, and of both it shall be as full as it can hold. The understanding will be in its most perfect act in loving. This love will be perfectly such as it ought to be. It shall be perfectly humble, the soul shall be in its place at all times,

adoring at God's feet, and yet embraced in the arms of his love. This love shall excite them to praise. And therefore, singing praises and hallelujahs shall be that in which they shall unweariedly be employed.

Two, this sight of God shall satisfy the soul with pleasure. So great will the joy be that the soul will desire no greater. It shall be as full of grace, as the large desires of the soul can receive. So sweet shall it be, that the soul will desire nothing sweeter. So pure and excellent will it be, that the soul will desire nothing better. Psa. 17:15, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." When the soul beholds the glory and love of God; it shall receive satisfying pleasure, for it shall receive God. God will communicate, and as it were pour forth himself into the soul. And with what inexpressible sweetness and complacency will the soul open itself to be thus filled, as the flowers open before the sun to be filled with his light and pleasant influences!

2nd. Having thus considered wherein the eternal happiness of the saints consists, I proceed next to consider some circumstances of it.

1. It will add sweetness to the happiness of heaven, that it is all the fruit of free grace, and the dying love of Christ. The saints in this world are of that spirit that they choose the way of salvation by free and sovereign grace. And salvation in this way seems better and sweeter by far, than if they could have it by their own works. Much more will this exceedingly heighten the sweetness of their happiness when they are in heaven, when their love, and their humility, will be perfect, when they will be abundantly more sensible than they are now, what vile creatures they were in this world. And when they consider to what exceeding glory God has advanced them, what a sweet admiration will it excite in them of the free and boundless grace of God! And what a sweetness will it add, that all this glorious blessedness which they possess, is not of themselves, but is the fruit of the love of that glorious person whom they shall then see in his glory, the fruit of his dying love, that it was bought by his own precious blood! It adds greatly to the value of a gift, if we receive if from a dear friend as a token of his love. But how greatly then will heaven be the more prized by the saints, when they consider it as the fruit of his love who is so glorious and excellent, and who is so exceedingly beloved by

them!

2. It will give them the greater sense of their own blessedness, when they contemplate the misery of those who are finally lost, and consider how exceedingly different is their own state. The saints will witness the misery of the wicked, they shall see their state at the day of judgment, they shall see them at the left hand with devils, shall hear the sentence pronounced, and see it executed. This shall greatly heighten the sense of their own happy state, when they consider how different their own state is, how differently God has dealt with themselves from what he has done with the wicked; when they see how dreadful the misery is from which they are delivered, and which they must have unavoidably suffered, had not God graciously redeemed them; when they consider that they deserved this misery as well as those that suffer it, but that Christ has of his free grace redeemed them. This will give exalted thoughts of the free grace of God, and cause them exceedingly to admire it, and will greatly heighten their exercises of love to him who has been so gracious to them, and consequently will heighten their joy in his love. As the damned when they contemplate the happiness of the saints in heaven will find their own misery aggravated, so the saints in heaven when they contemplate the misery of the damned in hell, will feel a greater sense of their own happiness.

3. There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven. As there are degrees among the angels, *viz.* thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; so there are degrees among the saints. In heaven are many mansions, and of different degrees of dignity. The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good works here. Christ will reward all according to their works. He that gained ten pounds was made ruler over ten cities, and he that gained five pounds over five cities. Luke 19:17; 2 Cor. 9:6, “He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” And the apostle Paul tells us that, as one star differs from another star in glory, so also it shall be in the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:41. Christ tells us that he who gives a cup of cold water unto a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. But this could not be true, if a person should have no greater reward for doing

many good works than if he did but few. It will be no damp to the happiness of those who have lower degrees of happiness and glory, that there are others advanced in glory above them. For all shall be perfectly happy, every one shall be perfectly satisfied. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others. And there shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign through the whole society. Those who are not so high in glory as other, will not envy those that are higher, but they will have so great, and strong, and pure love to them, that they will rejoice in their superior happiness. Their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves; so that instead of having a damp to their own happiness, it will add to it. They will see it to be fit that they that have been most eminent in works of righteousness should be most highly exalted in glory. And they will rejoice in having that done, that is fittest to be done. There will be a perfect harmony in that society; those that are most happy will also be most holy, and all will be both perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But yet there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness according to the measure of each one's capacity, and therefore those that are lowest in glory will have the greatest love to those that are highest in happiness, because they will see most of the image of God in them. And having the greatest love to them, they will rejoice to see them the most happy and the highest in glory. And so, on the other hand, those that are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, so they will be fullest of love. As they will excel in happiness, they will proportionally excel in divine benevolence and love to others, and will have more love to God and to the saints than those that are lower in holiness and happiness. And besides, those that will excel in glory will also excel in humility. Here in this world, those that are above others are the objects of envy, because that others conceive of them as being lifted up with it. But in heaven it will not be so, but those saints in heaven who excel in happiness will also in holiness, and consequently in humility. The saints in heaven are more humble than the saints on earth, and still the higher we go among them the greater humility there is. The highest orders of saints, who know most of God, see most of the distinction between God and them, and consequently are comparatively least in their own eyes, and so are more humble. The exaltation of some in heaven above the rest will be so far from diminishing the perfect happiness and

joy of the rest who are inferior, that they will be the happier for it. Such will be the union in their society that they will be partakers of each other's happiness. Then will be fulfilled in its perfection that which is declared in 1 Cor. 12:26, "If one of the members be honoured all the members rejoice with it."

4. This happiness of the saints shall never have any interruption. There will never be any alloy to it; there never will come any cloud to obscure their light; there never will be anything to cool their love. The rivers of pleasure will not fail, the glory and love of God and of Christ will forever be the same and the manifestation of it will have no interruption. No sin or corruption shall ever enter there, no temptation to disturb their blessedness. The divine love in the saints shall never cool, there shall be no inconsistency in any of them. The faculties of the saints shall never flag from exercise; and they will never be cloyed, their relish for those delights will forever be kept up to its height, that glorious society shall not grow weary of their hallelujahs. Their exercises, though they are so active and vigorous, will be performed with perfect ease. The saints shall not be weary of loving, and praising, and fearing, as the sun is never weary of shining.

5. And to sum up this whole description, there shall never be any end to their glory and blessedness. Therefore is it so often called eternal life, and everlasting life. We are told that at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall enter into life eternal. Mat. 25:46. The pleasures which there are at God's right hand, are said to be forevermore; Psa. 16:11. And that this is not merely a long duration, but an absolute eternity, is evident from that which Christ has said, that those who believe on him shall not die. John. 6:50. Rev. 22:5. In the description of the new Jerusalem it is said, "And they shall reign for ever and ever." The eternity of this blessedness shall crown all. If the saints knew that there would be an end to their happiness, though at never so great a distance, yet it would be a great damp to their joy. The greater the happiness is, so much the more uncomfortable would the thoughts of an end be, and so much the more joyful will it be to think that there will be no end. The saints will surely know that there will be no more danger of their happiness coming to an end, than there will be that

the being of God will come to an end. As God is eternal, so their happiness is eternal. As long as the fountain lasts, they need not fear but they shall be supplied.

APPLICATION

I. Hence we learn how great a mercy conversion is, because it confers upon him who is exposed to eternal misery a right to all this blessedness. Man, as he is naturally, is very far from this blessedness. We came into the world wretched, miserable, undone creatures, in cruel bondage to sin and Satan, under guilt and under wrath, and at enmity against God, the fountain of blessedness, and in a state of condemnation to everlasting destruction. But when a man is converted there is a great change made in his state; he is that day passed from death to life, he is brought out of that state of woe and misery into a sure title to glory, honor, and peace forever. When once a man is converted all this blessedness that we have heard of is his, he has an absolute right to it, God's work is passed for it, his faithful promise is given. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that promise of God shall not fail, but shall be fulfilled. Their witness is in heaven, and their record on high. On that day in which a man is converted he enters into a blessed state, he is sure to be a blessed person as long as he lives. And he has a right to all that blessedness we have heard of, at death, and in a state of separation, and at the day of judgment, and to that glory which the saints have in their state of consummate glory and blessedness. This teaches how great and how blessed a change conversion is in its consequences, and what cause have they who have good ground to think that they have been the subjects of it, to bless, and praise, and extol the name of God, when they consider what a situation they were once in, and what a happy state they are now in; for the bringing them out of that miserable state into so glorious a state is owing only to free and sovereign grace. 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as it thou hadst not received it?"

II. Hence we may learn the folly of those that are cold and slack in

seeking salvation, seeing that the glory and happiness of those who are saved is so exceedingly great. How unreasonable is it to expect to obtain that which is so great without effort! Men will seek worldly riches and honors that are worth so little, and cannot make them happy, and will soon vanish away, with great and indefatigable labor and diligence. And shall men expect to obtain such eternal glory and blessedness in a slack and cold way of seeking it? How unlike the nature and importance of this blessedness do men treat it that seek it in a cold and careless manner! And can it be expected that God will also treat it so unlike its value, as to bestow it upon such seekers?

III. Hence we may solve the difficulty of some Christians meeting with so much affliction and darkness in the world. Some godly persons are the subjects of very great outward afflictions, and some are the subjects of great spiritual darkness. Some truly godly persons spend great part of their lives in the dark, in exercising doubts, and anxious thoughts, and distressing fears. And oftentimes God's people make this an argument against themselves. They argue that if God loved them, and had made them his children, he would never leave them in such darkness and distress, he would give them more of the light of his countenance. They are ready to say with themselves, if God loves me, why does he not give me more comfort, why does he see me in such darkness, and does not comfort me? But what we have heard may solve all the difficulty. If their happiness throughout all eternity be so great, of how little consequence is it what may be their condition for that short moment they continue in this world! What if they are in the dark, what if they walk in darkness and are exercised with great trouble! How little difference will it make, though it be cast into the scales, when weighed against that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will prove lighter than vanity. If God gives eternal happiness to them, that is evident proof of his love, and all the darkness and sorrow they can meet with in this world are not worthy to be mentioned. All this darkness, how long soever continued, if we compare it with future glory, vanishes into nothing.

IV. This subject furnishes solid ground of consolation to the righteous. What can be matter of greater joy and comfort to any person, than to consider that he is entitled to such eternal blessedness? Here is sufficient consolation under all adversity; whatever changes we meet with in the world, this may be matter of abundant comfort under the greatest and heaviest trials. In these things a Christian may well rejoice, though the fig tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine. Having this firm support and consolation, a Christina will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Let these things, therefore, comfort thee, who fearest and lovest God and trustest in Christ. What a glorious hope, and incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading inheritance, are reserved in heaven for thee! Hence I would answer an objection or two, that unbelief in the saint may be ready to make against what has been said.

First, some may be ready to say, this glory and blessedness are so great and wonderful that it seems too great to be given to such creatures as men are. It seems almost incredible that God should so exalt and advance worms of the dust.

Answer. The death and suffering of Christ made everything credible that belongs to this blessedness. If God has not thought his own Son too much for us, what will he think too much for us? If God did not spare him, but gave him even to be made a reproach, and a curse, and a victim to death for us, no blessedness, however great, can be incredible which is the fruit of this. Rom. 8:32, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” If God would so contrive to show his love in the manner and means of procuring our happiness, nothing can be incredible in the degree of the happiness itself. If nothing be too much to be given to man, and to be done for man in the manner of procuring his happiness, nothing will be too much to be given to him as the happiness procured, and no degree of happiness too great for him to enjoy. If all that God does about it be consistent, his infinite wisdom will also work, to make their happiness and glory great in the degree of it.

Second, some Christians may still be ready to object. It is not too great to

be bestowed on others, yet it seems to me too great to be bestowed on such an unworthy creature as I. It seems incredible that God should ever give such glory to such an one as I am, that am so mean, and so worthless, and vile. I not only was once unworthy, but I am so unworthy still, I am so blind, I have so much sin, and so little goodness, I commit so much sin, and do so little good, that it appears incredible that I should have a title to such blessedness. I can far more easily think that others will possess it than myself.

Answer. It is no way incredible that infinite grace should bestow it on the meanest and unworthiest. God's design is to glorify his free grace, and this is one way by which free grace is glorified, *viz.* by bestowing such great blessedness on the most unworthy. This is of a piece with the rest. Everything in the work of redemption is wonderful, and therefore one of the names by which Christ is called, is Wonderful. As grace is wonderful in the means of procurement, *viz.* giving Christ to die, and wonderful in the degree of happiness procured; so it is wonderful with respect to the subjects of it, that they are in themselves so mean and unworthy.

V. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to natural men, earnestly to seek this blessedness. And here you may well consider,

First, how poor you are who have no heaven but this world! In this exceeding and eternal glory of which you have heard, you have no lot or portion. You have nothing but a little part of this clod of earth. And what is all that you have worth? If you have a little more land than some of your neighbors, or if you are in a way to make more money than others, if your accommodations are better than others, and you have more worldly conveniences and pleasures than others, or if you are promoted a little higher among men than some others are, what a poor portion is this. And how miserable are you who have no better happiness that you can call your own! How happy do these things make you, what great satisfaction do they yield to you! Are such things as these the rivers of pleasure that you choose for your portion? O, how miserable are you that have your portion in this life! When a few days are passed you must go to the grave and into eternity, and then your glory shall not descend after you. And

how wretched are they of whom it may be said, when they have done with worldly enjoyments, that they have received their consolation! Luke 6:24.

Second, to what misery are you exposed! You not only have no lot in this happiness and glory, but you are hanging over endless misery, and are in danger every day of being irrecoverably lost.

Third, you have now an opportunity to obtain this blessedness. It is true that now you are exposed to this misery, but yet this glory is offered to you. The time is not past wherein the offer is made. You have yet an opportunity to be made happy forever. The opportunity you now have to obtain the happiness of another world, is worth ten thousands of this world.

But here I would say something by way of direction in answer to this.

Inquiry. What must I be brought to in order to get to heaven?

Answer. 1. You must be brought entirely to renounce all hope of obtaining heaven by anything that you can do by your own strength, — that you cannot do it either directly or indirectly. Many are sensible that they cannot get to heaven by their own strength directly, but yet they hope to do it indirectly; they hope by their own strength to bring themselves to a disposition to close with Christ, and accept of him for a Savior. They are hoping to bring themselves to a compliance with the terms of salvation. You must be brought off from all confiding in your own strength; and you must also be brought to renounce your own righteousness as the price of heaven. The consideration of what has been said of the glory and happiness of the saints, may show us the exceeding folly of those that think to purchase so great happiness by their own righteousness. What a vain thought have men of their performances to think them a sufficient price to offer to God to purchase such glory of him! How would God dishonor himself, and dishonor such riches of his own goodness, if he should bestow them on men for their righteousness, and should accept their miserable performances as the price of them!

2. Your heart must be brought to close with him who has purchased heaven. Renouncing all other ways, your heart must entirely close with

him, and adhere to him, as the way, the truth, and the life. Your heart must be drawn to him, and it must be pleasing and sweet to you to have heaven as a free gift, as the fruit of mercy and saving grace, and you must assuredly believe that Christ is a sufficient Savior, and your soul must acquiesce in the way of salvation by him, by his blood and his righteousness, as wise, holy, sufficient, and excellent way. Your heart must incline to Jesus Christ as a Savior above your own righteousness and all other ways. Your delight must be in this holy way of salvation.

3. You must choose the God of heaven for your portion. You must be of the same temper and disposition with the psalmist, who says, Psa. 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth whom I desire beside thee." You must esteem and relish the enjoyment of him far above all other things. You must be brought to see that there is that in the enjoyment of God and communion with him that is far better than all the profits or pleasures of the world. It must be so with you, that if you could have your choice of all kinds of happiness you could devise, and have which you would, and in what degree you would, to all eternity, this would be what you would far prefer.

4. Your heart must be brought sincerely to close with the employments of heaven. In heaven they are not idle, but they are continually employed, and their employments are holy employments. They spend their time wholly in holy exercises; in contemplating on God, in praising and serving him. Rev. 22:3, "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." If ever you go to heaven, your heart must be brought beforehand to such a temper as freely to choose such employments, you must have a relish of them, and must account them excellent and delightful employments.

5. You must be pure in heart, and clean in hands. The pure in heart alone shall see God. Mat. 5:8. They that shall ascend into God's holy hill, are those that are of pure hearts and clean hands. Psa. 24:4. You must have and abhor all sin, and allow none in your life. Sin must become to you a great burden. You must loathe yourself for it, and fight and strive against it, to purge yourself more and more from it; striving more and more to mortify sin, earnestly desiring and seeking to be more holy, more conformed to the will of God, and to walk more becoming a Christian.

6. You must be brought to sell all for heaven. Mat. 13:44, 45, 46. Heaven must be to you like the treasure hid in a field; or like the pearl of great price. If you would have heaven, you must take it as your whole portion. You must in your heart part with all other things for it, and it must be your manner actually to part with them whenever they stand in the way of your getting forward towards heaven. If you would have heaven, you must sell your worldly profit and your credit, and the good will of your neighbors, and your worldly pleasures and conveniences, and whatever stands in your way. Many flatter themselves that they shall obtain heaven without this, and think they have a right to heaven, though they were never brought to this, but they are sure to find themselves disappointed.

7. You must never expect to go to heaven in any other than a strait and narrow way. Some expect to get to heaven who are not walking in a narrow way. The way they are walking in is a way of indulging their ease, and of shifting off the hard and difficult parts of religion. It is not the ways of self-denial, and toil, and laboriousness, but they walk in a broad way, a way wherein they are not pinched, but can go on without labor, or watchfulness, or bearing the cross. But such as these, let their hopes be what they may, and their profession what it may, and their pretenses to experiences what they may, are not like to get to heaven. To some, the way that the Scripture has laid out is too narrow and strait. Therefore they are endeavoring to get to heaven in a broad way; but it is in vain for you to contrive this. If you can find out any way of getting to heaven that is not a strait and narrow way, it will be a way that you are the first inventor of. If you go thither, you must go in the way of the footsteps of the flock. If you would go to heaven, you must be content to go there in the way of self-denial and sufferings, you must be willing to take up the cross daily and follow Christ, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

VI. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to the godly, to strive earnestly after holiness of life. What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, who have received such infinite mercy of God, and entertain such glorious hopes. Seeing God has

admitted you to such happiness, earnestly labor that you may walk in some measure answerably; seeing God has admitted you to the happiness of children, walk as children. Eph. 5:1. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; imitate your heavenly Father; be ye holy, for he is holy. Seeing that you are admitted to the blessedness of disciples and friends of Jesus, walk as the friends of Christ, imitate your glorious Lord and Head. Here consider several things: particularly,

First, what great love God hath bestowed upon you in choosing you to such unspeakable blessedness before the foundation of the world. How wonderful was the love of God in giving his Son to purchase this blessedness for you, and how wonderful was the love of the Son of God in shedding his own blood to purchase such glory for you! How ought you therefore to live to God's glory! Let me therefore beseech, by those great mercies of God, that you give yourself up a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Give the utmost diligence that you may keep al the commandments of God. Study that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Study that in all things you may be found approved. Seeing God hath so loved you, see that you love one another; let love be without dissimulation. Be ye kindly affectioned one with another with brotherly love. Be of the same mind one towards another, in honor preferring one another; have fervent charity among yourselves. Seeing God hath mercy on you, be ye merciful as your Father which is in heaven is merciful. Look not every one on his own things. Be pitiful, be courteous; be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. Christ hath thus loved you while an enemy; therefore recompense to no man evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing. Do good to them that do evil to you. Such things as these become those that are the heirs of the glory that we have heard of.

Second, consider how much above the world that blessedness is which God has given; how therefore ought you to live above the world. God has redeemed you out of the world, and therefore do not live as though you had your portion in this life. Live as pilgrims and strangers; as those that are not at home; as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of

God. Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. How dishonorable will it be to you that God had so advanced and entitled you to such glory, to set your heart upon the dust of the earth. How you dishonor the grace of God in giving you such blessedness; and how will you dishonor the blessedness that God has given, no more to set your heart on it, and to set it so much on the world!

Third, consider what a vast difference has God made between you and other men, how vastly different is your relative state from theirs, how much more has God done for you than for them. Seek therefore those things which are above, where God is. Will it not be a shame if one that is entitled to such glory conducts no better than a child of the devil? Consider it seriously; and let it not be asked with reference to you, Mat. 5:47. What do ye more than others? Other men love those that love them; other men do good to those that do good to them. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. And let it appear that you are of a spirit more excellent than your neighbor; manifest more love, and more meekness, and more humility, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering. Put ye on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another; and let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. Seeing god has given you so much, God and men may well expect of you, that you should be greatly distinguished in your life from other men.

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The Church's Marriage to Her Sons, and to

Her God

"Thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." -- Isaiah 62:4, 5

In the midst of many blessed promises that God makes to his church — in this and the preceding and following chapters — of advancement to a state of great peace, comfort, honor, and joy, after long-continued affliction, we have the sum of all contained in these two verses. In the 4th verse God says to his church, "Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land, Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." When it is said, "Thy land shall be married," we are to understand, "the body of thy people, thy whole race;" the land — by a metonymy, very usual in Scripture — being put for the people that inhabit the land. — The 5th verse explains how this should be accomplished in two things, *viz. in being married to her sons, and married to her God.*

I. It is promised that she should be *married to her sons,* or that her sons should marry her? "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." Or, as the words might have been more literally translated from the original: "As a young man is married to a virgin, so shall thy sons be married to thee." Some by this understand a promise, that the posterity of the captivated Jews should return again from Babylon to the land of Canaan, and should be, as it were, married or wedded to their own land, *i.e.* they should be re-united to their own land, and should have great comfort and joy in it, as a young man in a virgin that he marries. But when it is said, "So shall thy sons marry thee," God does not direct his speech to the land itself, but to the church whose land it was. The pronoun *thee* being applied to the same mystical person in this former part of the verse, as in the words immediately following in the latter part of the same sentence, "And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." It is the church, and not the hills and valleys of the land of Canaan, that is God's bride, or the Lamb's wife. It is also manifest that when God says, "So shall thy sons marry

thee," he continues to speak to her to whom he had spoken in the three preceding verses. But there it is not the land of Canaan, but the church, that he speaks to when he says, "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken," etc. And to represent the land itself as a bride and the subject of espousals and marriage, would be a figure of speech very unnatural, and not known in Scripture. But for the church of God to be thus represented is very usual from the beginning to the end of the Bible. And then it is manifest that the return of the Jews to the land of Canaan from the Babylonish captivity, is not the event mainly intended by the prophecy of which these words are a part. That was not the time fulfilled in the 2nd verse of this chapter, "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." That was not the time spoken of in the preceding chapters with which this chapter is one continued prophecy. That was not the time spoken of in the last words of the foregoing chapter when the Lord would cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations. Nor was it the time spoken of in the 5th, 6th, and 9th verses of that chapter when "strangers should stand and feed the flocks of God's people, and the sons of the alien should be their ploughmen, and vine-dressers; but they should be named the priests of the Lord, and men should call them the ministers of God; when they should eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory boast themselves, and their seed should be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; and all that should see them should acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Nor was that the time spoken of in the chapter preceding that "when the abundance of the sea should be converted unto the church; when the isles should wait for God, and the ships of Tarshish to bring her sons from far, and their silver and gold with them; when the forces of the Gentiles and their kings should be brought; when the church should suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breast of kings; and when that nation and kingdom that would not serve her should perish and be utterly wasted: and when the sun should be no more her light by day, neither for brightness should the moon give light unto her, but the Lord should be unto her an everlasting

light, and her God her glory; and her sun should no more go down, nor her moon withdraw itself, because the Lord should be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning should be ended." These things manifestly have respect to the Christian church in her most perfect and glorious state on earth in the last ages of the world, when the church should be so far from being confined to the land of Canaan, that she should fill the whole earth, and all lands should be alike holy.

These words in the text, "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee," I choose rather, with others, to understand as expressive of the church's union with her faithful pastors, and the great benefits she should receive from them. God's ministers, though they are set to be the instructors, guides, and fathers of God's people, yet are also the sons of the church. Amos 2:11, "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites." Such as these, when faithful, are those precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold spoken of, Lam. 4:2, 7. "Her Nazarites were purer than show, they were whiter than milk." and as he that marries a young virgin becomes the guide of her youth, so these sons of Zion are represented as taking her by the hand as her guide. Isa. 51:18, "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up." That by these sons of the church is meant ministers of the gospel, is confirmed by the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen upon they walls, O Jerusalem."

That the sons of the church should be married to her as a young man to a virgin is a mystery not unlike many others held forth in the Word of God concerning the relation between Christ and his people, and their relation to him and to one another. Christ is David's Lord and yet his Son, and both the Root and Offspring of David. Christ is a Son born and a Child given and yet the everlasting Father. The church is Christ's mother, Song 3:11 and 8:1, and yet his spouse, his sister, and his child. Believers are Christ's mother, and yet his sister and brother. Ministers are the sons of the church, and yet are her fathers. The apostle speaks of himself, as the father of the members of the church of Corinth, and also the mother of the Gal., travailing in birth with them, Gal. 4:19.

II. The second and chief fulfillment of the promise consists in the church

being married to Christ. “And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” Not that we are to understand that the church has many husbands, or that Christ is one husband, and ministers are other husbands strictly speaking. For though ministers are here spoken of as being married to the church, yet it is not as his competitors, or as standing in a conjugal relation to his bride in anywise parallel with his. For the church properly has but one husband. She is not an adulteress, but a virgin who is devoted wholly to the Lamb and who follows him whithersoever he goes. But ministers espouse the church entirely as Christ’s ambassadors, as representing him and standing in his stead, being sent forth by him to be married to her in his name, that by this means she may be married to her in his name, that by this means she may be married to him. As when a prince marries a foreign lady by proxy, the prince’s ambassador marries her, but not in his own name, but in the name of his master, that he may be the instrument of bringing her into a true conjugal relation to him. This is agreeable to what the apostle says. 2 Cor. 11:2, “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Here the apostle represents himself as being, as it were, the husband of the church of Corinth. For it is the husband that is jealous when the wife commits adultery. And yet he speaks of himself as having espoused them, not in his own name, but in that name of Christ, and for him, and him only, and as his ambassador, sent forth to bring them home a chaste virgin to him. Ministers are in the text represented as married to the church in the same sense that elsewhere they are represented as fathers of the church. The church has but one father, even God, and ministers are fathers as his ambassadors. So the church has but one shepherd. John 10:16, “There shall be one fold and one shepherd.” But yet ministers, as Christ’s ambassadors, are often called the church’s shepherds or pastors. The church has but one Savior. But yet ministers, as his ambassadors and instruments, are called her saviors. 1 Tim. 4:16, “In doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.” Oba. 21. “And saviours shall come upon mount Zion.” The church has but one priest. But yet in Isa. 66:21, speaking of the ministers of the Gentile nations, it is said, “I will take of them for priests and Levites.” The church has but one Judge, for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Yet Christ tells his apostles, that they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging

the twelve tribes of Israel.

When the text speaks first of ministers marrying the church, and then of Christ's rejoicing over her as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, the former is manifestly spoken of as being in order to the latter, even in order to the joy and happiness that the church shall have in her true bridegroom. The preaching of the gospel is in this context spoken of three times successively, as the great means of bringing about the prosperity and joy of the church. Once, in the first verse, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." And then in the text and lastly in the two following verses, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The text thus opened affords these two propositions proper for our consideration on the solemn occasion of this day.

I. The uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

II. This union of ministers with the people of Christ is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

I. Prop. The uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

I say, the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people, and in a due

manner, for we must suppose that the promise God makes to the church in the text relates to such ministers, and such a manner of union with the church; because this is promised to the church as a part of her latter-day glory and as a benefit that should be granted her by God as the fruit of his great love to her, and an instance of her great spiritual prosperity and happiness in her purest and most excellent state on earth. But it would be no such instance of God's great favor and the church's happiness, to have unfaithful ministers entering into office in an undue and improper manner. They are evidently faithful ministers that are spoken of in the next verse, where the same are doubtless spoken of as in the text. "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." And they are those that shall be introduced into the ministry at a time of its extraordinary purity, order, and beauty, wherein (as is said in the first, second, and third verses) her "righteousness should go forth as brightness, and the Gentiles should see her righteousness, and all kings her glory, and she should be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God."

When I speak of the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in a due manner, I do not mean a due manner only with regard to external order. But its being truly done in a holy manner, with sincere upright aims and intentions, with a right disposition, and proper frames of mind in those that are concerned, and particularly in the minister that takes office, and God's people to whom he is united, each exercising in this affair a proper regard to God and one another. — Such an uniting of a faithful minister with the people of God in the ministerial office is in some respects like a young man marrying a virgin.

First, when a duly qualified person is properly invested with the ministerial character, and does in a due manner take upon him the sacred work and office of a minister of the gospel, he does, in some sense, espouse the church of Christ in general. For though he [does] not properly stand in a pastoral relation to the whole church of Christ through the earth, and is far from becoming an universal pastor; yet thenceforward he has a different concern with the church of Christ in general, and its interests and welfare, than other persons have that are laymen, and should be regarded otherwise by all the members of the

Christian church. Wherever he is providentially called to preach the Word of God or minister in holy things, he ought to be received as a minister of Christ, and the messenger of the Lord of hosts to them. And every one that takes on him this office as he ought to do, espouses the church of Christ, as he espouses the interest of the church in a manner that is peculiar. He is under obligations, as a minister of the Christian church, beyond other men, to love the church, as Christ her true bridegroom has loved her, and to prefer Jerusalem above is chief joy, and to imitate Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls and husband of the church in his care and tender concern for her welfare, and earnest and constant labors to promote it, as he has opportunity. And as he, in taking office, devotes himself to the service of Christ in his church, so he gives himself to the church, to be hers, in that love, tender care, constant endeavor, and earnest labor for her provision, comfort, and welfare that is proper to his office, as a minister of Providence, as long as he lies, as a young man gives himself to a virgin when he marries her. And the church of Christ in general, as constituted of true saints through the world (though they do not deliver up themselves to any one particular minister, as universal pastor, yet), cleave to and embrace the ministry of the church with endeared affection, high honor, and esteem, for Christ's sake. They joyfully commit and subject themselves to them. They resolve to honor and help them, to be guided by them and obey them so long as in the world, as the bride does in marriage deliver up herself to her husband. And the ministry in general, or the whole number of faithful ministers, being all united in the same work as fellow-laborers, and conspiring to the same design as fellow-helpers, to the grace of God, may be considered as one mystical person, that espouses the church as a young man espouses a virgin; as the many elders of the church of Ephesus are represented as one mystical person, Rev. 2:1 and all called the angel of the church of Ephesus; and as the faithful ministers of Christ in general, all over the world, seem to be represented as one mystical person, and called an angel, Rev. 14:6. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." — But,

Second, more especially is the uniting of a faithful minister with a

particular Christian people, as their pastor, when done in a due manner, like a young man marrying a virgin. — It is so with respect to the union itself, the concomitants of the union, and the fruits of it.

1. The *union itself* is in several respects like that which is between a young man and a virgin whom he marries.

It is so with respect to mutual regard and affection. A faithful minister, that is in a Christian manner united to a Christian people as their pastor, has his heart united to them in the most ardent and tender affection. And they, on the other hand, have their hearts united to him, esteeming him very highly in love for his work's sake, and receiving him with honor and reverence, and willingly subjecting themselves to him, and committing themselves to his care, as being under Christ their head and guide.

And such a pastor and people are like a young man and virgin united in marriage, with respect to the purity of their regard one to another. The young man gives himself to his bride in purity, as undebauched by meretricious embraces. And she also presents herself to him a chaste virgin. So in such an union of a minister and people as we are speaking of, the parties united are pure and holy in their affection and regard one to another. The minister's heart is united to the people, not for filthy lucre or any worldly advantage, but with a pure benevolence to them and desire of their spiritual welfare and prosperity, and complacence in them as the children of God and followers of Christ Jesus. And, on the other hand, they love and honor him with a holy affection and esteem. And not merely as having their admiration raised, and their carnal affection moved, by having their curiosity, and other fleshly principles, gratified by a florid eloquence, and the excellency of speech and man's wisdom. But receiving him as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, coming to them on a divine and infinitely important errand, and with those holy qualifications that resemble the virtues of the Lamb of God.

And as the bridegroom and bride give themselves to each other in covenant, so it is in that union we are speaking of between a faithful pastor and a Christian people. The minister, by solemn vows, devotes himself to the people, to improve his time and strength, and spend and be spent for them, so long as God in his providence shall continue the union.

And they, on the other hand, in a holy covenant commit the care of their souls, and subject themselves, to him.

2. The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people is like that between a young man and virgin in their marriage with respect to the *concomitants* of it.

When such a minister and such a people are thus united, it is attended with great joy. The minister joyfully devoting himself to the service of his Lord in the work of the ministry, as a work that he delights in. And also joyfully uniting himself to the society of the saints that he is set over, as having complacence in them, for his dear Lord's sake, whose people they are. And willingly and joyfully, on Christ's call, undertaking the labors and difficulties of the service of their souls. And they, on the other hand, joyfully receiving him as a precious gift of their ascended Redeemer. Thus a faithful minister and a Christian people are each other's joy. Rom. 15:32, "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." 2 Cor. 1:14, "As you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye are ours."

Another concomitant of this union, wherein it resembles that which becomes a young man and virgin united in marriage is mutual helpfulness and a constant care and endeavor to promote each other's good and comfort. The minister earnestly and continually seeks the profit and comfort of the souls of his people, and to guard and defend them from every thing that might annoy them, and studies and labors to promote their spiritual peace and prosperity. They, on the other hand, make it their constant care to promote his comfort, to make the burden of his difficult work easy, to avoid those things that might add to the difficulty of it, and that might justly be grievous to his heart. They do what in them lies to encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands in his work, and are ready to say to him, when called to exert himself in the more difficult parts of his work, as the people of old to Ezra the priest, when they saw him bowed down under the burden of a difficult affair. Ezra 10:4, "Arise, for this matter belongeth to thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it." They spare no pains nor cost to make their pastor's outward circumstances easy and comfortable, and free from pinching necessities and distracting cares, and to put him under the best

advantages to follow his great work fully and successfully.

Such a pastor and people, as it is between a couple happily united in a conjugal relation, have a mutual sympathy with each other, a fellow-feeling of each other's burdens and calamities, and a communion in each other's prosperity and joy. When the people suffer in their spiritual interests, the pastor suffers. He is afflicted when he sees their souls in trouble and darkness. He feels their wounds. And he looks on their prosperity and comfort as his own. 2 Cor. 11:29, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. 7:13, "We were comforted in your comfort." And, on the other hand, the people feel their pastor's burdens, and rejoice in his prosperity and consolations; see Phil. 4:14 and 2 Cor. 2:3.

3. This union is like that which is between a young man and a virgin in its *fruits*.

One fruit of it is mutual benefit: they become meet helps one for another. The people receive great benefit by the minister, as he is their teacher to communicate spiritual instructions and counsels to them, and is set to watch over them to defend them from those enemies and calamities they are liable to. And so is, under Christ, to be both their guide and guard, as the husband is of the wife. And as the husband provides the wife with food and clothing, so the pastor, as Christ's steward, makes provision for his people, and brings forth out of his treasure things new and old, gives every one his portion of meat in due season, and is made the instrument of spiritually clothing and adorning their souls. And, on the other hand, the minister receives benefit from the people, as they minister greatly to his spiritual good by that holy converse to which their union to him as his flock leads them. The conjugal relation leads the persons united therein to the most intimate acquaintance and conversation with each other. So the union there is between a faithful pastor and a Christian people, leads them to intimate conversation about things of a spiritual nature. It leads the people most freely and fully to open the case of their souls to the pastor, and leads him to deal most freely, closely, and thoroughly with them in things pertaining thereto. And this conversation not only tends to *their* benefit, but also greatly to *his*. And the pastor receives benefit from the people outwardly, as they take care of and order his outward

accommodations for his support and comfort, and do as it were spread and serve his table for him.

Another fruit of this union, wherein it resembles the conjugal, is a spiritual offspring. There is wont to arise from the union of such a pastor and people a spiritual race of children. These new-born children of God are in the Scripture represented both as the children of ministers, as those who have begotten them through the gospel, and also as the children of the church, who is represented as their mother that has brought them forth, and at whose breasts they are nourished; as in Isa. 54:1, and 66:11; Gal. 4:26; 1 Pet. 2:2 and many other places.

Having thus briefly shown how the uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man marrying a virgin, I proceed now to the

II. Prop. *viz.* That this union of ministers with the people of Christ is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

First, the saints are, and shall be, the subjects of this blessedness. Of all the various kinds of union of sensible and temporal things that are used in Scripture to represent the relation there is between Christ and his church, that which is between bridegroom and bride, or husband and wife, is much the most frequently made use of both in the Old and New Testament. The Holy Ghost seems to take a peculiar delight in this, as a similitude fit to represent the strict, intimate, and blessed union that is between Christ and his saints. The apostle intimates that one end why God appointed marriage and established so near a relation as that between husband and wife was that it might be a type of the union that is between Christ and his church. In Eph. 5:30, 31, 32. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh." — *For this cause, i.e.* because we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones, God appointed that man and wife

should be so joined together as to be one flesh, to represent this high and blessed union between Christ and his church. The apostle explains himself in the next words, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” This institution of marriage, making the man and his wife one flesh, is a great mystery; *i.e.* there is a great and glorious mystery hid in the design of it. And the apostle tells us what that glorious mystery is, “I speak concerning Christ and the church,” as much as to say, the mystery I speak of, is that blessed union that is between Christ and his church, which I spoke of before.

This is a blessed union indeed of which that between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a shadow. Ministers are not the proper husbands of the church, though their union to God’s people, as Christ’s ambassadors, in several respects resembles the conjugal relation. But Christ is the true husband of the church, to whom the souls of the saints are espoused indeed, and to whom they are united as his flesh and his bones, yea and one spirit; to whom they have given themselves in an everlasting covenant, and whom alone they cleave to, love, honor, obey, and trust in, as their spiritual husband, whom alone they reserve themselves for as chaste virgins, and whom they follow whithersoever he goeth. There are many ministers in the church of Christ, and there may be several pastors of one particular church, but the church has but one husband, all others are rejected and despised in comparison of him. He is among the sons as the apple tree among the trees of the wood. They all are barren and worthless, he only is the fruitful tree, and therefore, leaving all others, the church betakes herself to him alone, and sits under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to her taste. She takes up her full and entire rest in him, desiring no other. — The relation between a minister and people shall be dissolved, and may be dissolved before death. But the union between Christ and his church shall never be dissolved, neither before death nor by death, but shall endure through all eternity. “The mountains shall part, and the hills be removed; but Christ’s conjugal love and kindness shall not depart from his church; neither shall the covenant of his peace, the marriage-covenant, be removed,” Isa. 54:10 — The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a partial resemblance even of the marriage union, it is like marriage only in some particulars. But with respect to the union between Christ and his

church, marriage is but a partial resemblance, yea, a faint shadow. Every thing desirable and excellent in the union between an earthly bridegroom and bride, is to be found in the union between Christ and his church. And that in an infinitely greater perfection and more glorious manner. — There is infinitely more to be found in it than ever was found between the happiest couple in a conjugal relation, or could be found if the bride and bridegroom had not only the innocence of Adam and Eve, but the perfection of angels.

Christ and his saints, standing in such a relation as this one to another, the saints must needs be unspeakably happy. Their mutual joy in each other is answerable to the nearness of their relation and strictness of their union. Christ rejoices over the church as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, and she rejoices in him as the bride rejoices in the bridegroom. My text has respect to the mutual joy that Christ and his church should have in each other. For though the joy of Christ over his church only is mentioned, yet it is evident that this is here spoken of and promised as the great happiness of the church, and therefore supposes her joy in him.

The mutual joy of Christ and his church is like that of bridegroom and bride, in that they rejoice in each other, as those whom they have chosen above others, for their nearest, most intimate, and everlasting friends and companions. The church is Christ's chosen. Isa. 41:9, "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." Chap. 48:10, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." How often are God's saints called his elect or chosen ones! He has chosen them, not to be mere servants, but friends. John 15:15, "I call you not servants; but I have called you friends." And though Christ be the Lord of glory, infinitely above men and angels, yet he has chosen the elect to be his companions, and has taken upon him their nature, and so in some respect, as it were, leveled himself with them, that he might be their brother and companion. Christ, as well as David, calls the saints his brethren and companions. Psa. 122:8, "For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee." So in the book of Canticles, he calls his church his sister and spouse. Christ has loved and chosen his church as his peculiar friend, above others. Psa. 135:4, "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." As the bridegroom chooses the bride for his peculiar friend above all others in

the world, so Christ has chosen his church for a peculiar nearness to him, as his flesh and his bone, and the high honor and dignity of espousals above all others, rather than the fallen angels, yea, rather than the elect angels. For verily in this respect, “he taketh not hold of angels, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham;” as the words are in the original, Heb. 2:16. He has chosen his church above the rest of mankind, above all the heathen nations, and those that are without the visible church, and above all other professing Christians. Song 6:9, “My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her.” Thus Christ rejoices over his church, as obtaining in her that which he has chosen above all the rest of the creation, and as sweetly resting in his choice, Psa. 132:13, 14, “The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it. — This is my rest for ever.”

On the other hand, the church chooses Christ above all others. He is in her eyes the chief among ten thousands, fairer than the sons of men. She rejects the suit of all his rivals, for his sake. Her heart relinquishes the whole world. He is her pearl of great price, for which she parts with all, and rejoices in him, as the choice and rest of her soul.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other, as having a special propriety in each other. All things are Christ's, but he has a special propriety in his church. There is nothing in heaven or earth, among all the creatures, that is his, in that high and excellent manner that the church is his. They are often called his portion and inheritance. They are said, Rev. 14:4, to be “the first-fruits to God and the Lamb.” As of old, the first fruit was that part of the harvest that belonged to God, and was to be offered to him. So the saints are the first fruits of God’s creatures, being that part which is in a peculiar manner Christ’s portion, above all the rest of the creation. Jam. 1:18, “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” And Christ rejoices in his church, as in that which is peculiarly his. Isa. 65:19, “I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people.” The church has also a peculiar propriety in Christ: though other things are hers, yet nothing is hers in that manner that her spiritual bridegroom is hers. Great and glorious as he is, yet he, with all his dignity and glory, is wholly given to her, to be fully possessed and enjoyed by her,

to the utmost degree that she is capable of. Therefore we have her so often saying in the language of exultation and triumph, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Song 2:16, and 6:3, and 7:10.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other as those that are the objects of each other’s most tender and ardent love. The love of Christ to his church is altogether unparalleled. The height and depth and length and breadth of it pass knowledge, for he loved the church, and gave himself for it. And his love to her proved stronger than death. And on the other hand, she loves him with a supreme affection. Nothing stands in competition with him in her heart. She loves him with all her heart. Her whole soul is offered up to him in the flame of love. And Christ rejoices and has sweet rest and delight in his love to the church. Zep. 3:17, “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” So the church, in the exercises of her love to Christ, rejoices with unspeakable joy. 1 Pet. 1:7, 8, “Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Christ and his church rejoice in each other’s beauty. The church rejoices in Christ’s divine beauty and glory. She, as it were, sweetly solaces herself in the light of the glory of the Sun or righteousness. And the saints say one to another, as in Isa. 2:5, “O house of Jacob, come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” The perfections and virtues of Christ are as a perfumed ointment to the church that make his very name to be to her as ointment poured forth. Song 1:3, “Because of the savour of they good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.” And Christ delights and rejoices in the beauty of the church, the beauty which he hat put upon her: her Christian graces are ointments of great price in his sight, 1 Pet. 3:4. And he is spoken of as greatly desiring her beauty, Psa. 45:11. Yea, he himself speaks of his heart as ravished with her beauty, Song 4:9, “Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine yes, with one chain of thy neck.”

Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other’s love. Wine is spoken of, Psa. 104:15, as that which maketh glad

man's heart. But the church of Christ is spoken of as rejoicing in the love of Christ, as that which is more pleasant and refreshing than wine. Song 1:4, "The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." So on the other hand, Christ speaks of the church's love as far better to him than wine. Song 4:10, "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!"

Christ and his church rejoice in communion with each other, as in being united in their happiness, and having fellowship and a joint participation in each other's good. As the bridegroom and bride rejoice together at the wedding-feast, and as thenceforward they are joint partakers of each other's comforts and joys. Rev 3:20, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." The church has fellowship with Christ in his own happiness, and his divine entertainments. His joy is fulfilled in her, John 15:11, and 17:13. She sees light in his light. And she is made to drink at the river of his own pleasures, Psa. 36:8, 9. And Christ brings her to eat and drink at his own table, to take her fill of his own entertainments. Song 5:1, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And he, on the other hand, has fellowship with her. He feasts with her. Her joys are his. And he rejoices in that entertainment that she provides for him. So Christ is said to feed among the lilies, Song 2:16 and chap. 7:13. She speaks of all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which she had laid up, and says to him chap. 4:16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." And he makes answer in the next verse, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk."

And lastly, Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in conversing with each other. The words of Christ by which he converses with his church, are most sweet to her. And therefore she says of him, Song 5:16, "His mouth is most sweet." And on the other hand, he says of her, chapter 2:14, "Let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice." And chapter 4:11, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under they tongue."

Christ rejoices over his saints as the bridegroom over the bride at all

times. But there are some seasons wherein he does so more especially. Such a season is the time of the soul's conversion. When the good shepherd finds his lost sheep, then he brings it home rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me. The day of a sinner's conversion is the day of Christ's espousals, and so is eminently the day of his rejoicing. Song 3:11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." And it is oftentimes remarkably the day of the saints' rejoicing in Christ. For then God turns again the captivity of his elect people and, as it were, fills their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing; as in Psa. 126 at the beginning. We read of the jailer, that when he was converted, "he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house," Acts 16:34. — There are other seasons of special communion of the saints with Christ wherein Christ does in a special manner rejoice over his saints, and as their bridegroom brings them into his chambers, that they also may be glad and rejoice in him, Song 1:4.

But this mutual rejoicing of Christ and his saints will be in its perfection at the time of the saints' glorification with Christ in heaven. For that is the proper time of the saints' entering in with the bridegroom into the marriage, Mat. 25:10. The saints' conversion is rather like the betrothing of the intended bride to the bridegroom before they come together. But at the time of the saints' glorification that shall be fulfilled in Psa. 45:15. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace." That is the time when those whom Christ loved, and for whom he gave himself — that he might sanctify and cleanse them, as with the washing of water by the word — shall be presented to him in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Then the church shall be brought to the full enjoyment of her bridegroom, having all tears wiped away from her eyes. And there shall be no more distance or absence. She shall then be brought to the entertainments of an eternal wedding-feast, and to dwell forever with her bridegroom, yea, to dwell eternally in his embraces. Then Christ will give her his loves. And she shall drink her fill, yea, she shall swim in the ocean of his love.

And as there are various seasons wherein Christ and particular saints do

more especially rejoice in each other, so there are also certain seasons wherein Christ does more especially rejoice over his church collectively taken. Such a season is a time of remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God. It is a time of the espousals of many souls to Christ, and so of the joy of espousals. It is a time wherein Christ is wont more especially to visit his saints with his loving-kindness, and to bring them near to himself, and especially to refresh their hearts with divine communications. On which account, it becomes a time of great joy to the church of Christ. So when the Spirit of God was so wonderfully poured out on the city of Samaria, with the preaching of Philip, we read that "there was great joy in that city," Acts 8:8. And the time of that wonderful effusion of the Spirit at Jerusalem, begun at the feast of Pentecost, was a time of holy feasting and rejoicing, and a kind of a wedding-day to the church of Christ; wherein "they continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart," Acts 2:46.

But more especially is the time of that great outpouring of the Spirit of God in the latter days, so often foretold in the Scriptures, represented as the marriage of the Lamb, and the rejoicing of Christ and his church in each other, as the bridegroom and the bride. This is the time prophesied of in our text and context and foretold in Isa. 65:19 "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, not the voice of crying." This is the time spoken of Rev. 19:6, 7, 8, 9 where the apostle John tells us he "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of might thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And adds, "To her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

But above all, the time of Christ's last coming is that of the consummation of the church's marriage with the Lamb and of the complete and most perfect joy of the wedding. In that resurrection-morning, when the sun of

righteousness shall appear in our heavens, shining in all his brightness and glory, he will come forth as a bridegroom. He shall come in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels. And at that glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, shall the whole elect church, complete as to every individual member, and each member with the whole man, both body and soul, and both in perfect glory, ascend up to meet the Lord in the air, to be thenceforth forever with the Lord. That will be indeed a joyful meeting of this glorious bridegroom and bride. Then the bridegroom will appear in all his glory without any veil. And then the saints shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father and at the right hand of their Redeemer. And then the church will appear as the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is the state of the church after the resurrection that is spoken of [in] Rev. 21:2, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And verse 9, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Then will come the time, when Christ will sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him into the palace of his glory, which he had been preparing for her from the foundation of the world, and shall, as it were, take her by the hand, and lead her in with him. And this glorious bridegroom and bride shall, with all their shining ornaments, ascend up together into the heaven of heavens, the whole multitude of glorious angels waiting upon them, and this son and daughter of God shall, in their united glory and joy, present themselves together before the Father; when Christ shall say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." And they both shall in that relation and union, together receive the Father's blessing. And shall thenceforward rejoice together in consummate, uninterrupted, immutable, and everlasting glory, in the love and embraces of each other, and joint enjoyment of the love of the Father.

Second, that aforementioned union of faithful ministers with the people of Christ is in order to this blessedness.

1. It is only with reference to Christ, as the true bridegroom of his church, that there is any union between a faithful minister and a Christian people, that is like that of a bridegroom and bride.

As I observed before, a faithful minister espouses a Christian people, not

in his own name, but as Christ's ambassador. He espouses them that therein they may be espoused to Christ. He loves her with a tender conjugal affection, as she is the spouse of Christ, and as he, as the minister of Christ, has his heart under the influence of the Spirit of Christ. As Abraham's faithful servant, that was sent to fetch a wife for his master's son, was captivated with Rebekah's beauty and virtue; but not with reference to an union with himself, but with his master Isaac. It was for his sake he loved her, and it was for him that he desired her. He set his heart upon her, that she might be Isaac's wife. And it was for this that he greatly rejoiced over her, for this he wooed her, and for this he obtained her, and she was for a season, in a sense, united to him. But it was as a fellow-traveler, that by him she might be brought to Isaac in the land of Canaan. For this he adorned her with ornaments of gold. It was to prepare her for Isaac's embraces. All that tender care which a faithful minister takes of his people as a kind of spiritual husband — to provide for them, to lead, and feed, and comfort them — is not as to his own bride, but his master's.

And on the other hand, the people receive him, unite themselves to him in covenant, honor him, subject themselves to him, and obey him, only for Christ's sake, and as one that represents him, and acts in his name towards them. All this love and honor and submission is ultimately referred to Christ. Thus the apostle says, Gal. 4:14, "Ye received me as an angel, or messenger of God, even as Christ Jesus." And the children that are brought forth in consequence of the union of the pastor and people are not properly the minister's children, but the children of Christ. They are not born of man, but of God.

2. The things that appertain to that aforementioned union of a faithful minister and Christian people are the principal appointed means of bringing the church to that blessedness that has been spoken of. Abraham's servant, and the part he acted as Isaac's agent towards Rebekah, were the principal means of his being brought to enjoy the benefits of her conjugal relation to Isaac. Ministers are sent to woo the souls of men for Christ. 2 Cor. 5:20, "We are then ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We read in Mat. 22 of a certain king that made a

marriage for his son and sent forth his servants to invite and bring in the guests. These servants are ministers. The labors of faithful ministers are the principal means God is wont to make use of for the conversion of the children of the church, and so of their espousals unto Christ. I have espoused you to one husband, says the apostle, 2 Cor. 11:2. The preaching of the gospel by faithful ministers is the principal means that God uses for exhibiting Christ, his love and benefits to his elect people, and the chief means of their being sanctified, and so fitted to enjoy their spiritual bridegroom. Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, as by the washing of water by the word (*i.e.* by the preaching of the gospel), and so might present it to himself, a glorious church. The labors of faithful ministers are ordinarily the principal means of the joy of the saints in Christ Jesus, in their fellowship with their spiritual bridegroom in this world. 2 Cor. 1:24, "We are helpers of your joy." They are God's instruments for bringing up the church, as it were, from her childhood, till she is fit for her marriage with the Lord of glory as Mordecai brought up Hadassah, or Esther, whereby she was fitted to be queen in Ahasuerus's court. God purifies the church under their hand, as Esther (to fit her for her marriage with the king) was committed to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women, to be purified six months with oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odors. They are made the instruments of clothing the church in her wedding-garments, that fine linen, clean and white, and adorning her for her husband; as Abraham's servant adorned Rebekah with golden ear-rings and bracelets. Faithful ministers are made the instruments of leading the people of God in the way to heaven, conducting them to the glorious presence of the bridegroom, to the consummate joys of her marriage with the Lamb; as Abraham's servant conducted Rebekah from Padan-aram to Canaan, and presented her to Isaac, and delivered her into his embraces. For it is the office of ministers, not only to espouse the church to her husband, but to present her a chaste virgin to Christ.

I would now conclude this discourse with some exhortations, agreeable to what has been said. And,

I. The exhortation may be to all that are called to the work of the gospel-ministry. — Let us who are honored by the glorious bridegroom of the church, to be employed as his ministers, to so high a purpose, as has been represented, be engaged and induced by what has been observed, to faithfulness in our great work; that we may be and act towards Christ's people that are committed to our care, as those that are united to them in holy espousals, for Christ's sake, and in order to their being brought to the unspeakable blessedness of that more glorious union with the Lamb of God, in which he shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. Let us see to it that our hearts are united to them, as a young man to a virgin that he marries, in the most ardent and tender affection. And that our regard to them be pure and uncorrupt, that it may be a regard to them, and not to what they have, or any worldly advantages we hope to gain of them. And let us behave ourselves as those that are devoted to their good, being willing to spend and be spent for them, joyfully undertaking and enduring the labor and self-denial that is requisite in order to a thorough fulfilling the ministry that we have received. Let us continually and earnestly endeavor to promote the prosperity and salvation of the souls committed to our care, looking on their calamities and their prosperity as our own, feeling their spiritual wounds and griefs, and refreshed with their consolations. And spending our whole lives in diligent care and endeavor to provide for, nourish, and instruct our people, as the intended spouse of Christ, yet in her minority, that we may form her mind and behavior, and bring her up for him, and that we may cleanse her, as with the washing of water by the word, and purify her as with sweet odors, and clothed in such raiment as may become Christ's bride. Let us aim that when the appointed wedding day comes, we may have done our work as Christ's messengers and may then be ready to present Christ's spouse to him, a chaste virgin, properly educated and formed, and suitably adorned for her marriage with the Lamb. That he may then present her to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and may receive her into his eternal embraces, in perfect purity, beauty, and glory.

II. Here I would mention three or four things tending to excite us to this fidelity.

First, we ought to consider how much Christ has done to obtain that joy, wherein he rejoices over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love, and grace that was in his heart, and that in this way God might be glorified. Doubtless the work of creation is subordinate to the work of redemption. The creation of the new heavens and new earth is represented as so much more excellent that the old, that, in comparison, it is not worthy to be mentioned or come into mind.

Christ has done greater things than to create the world in order to obtain his bride and the joy of his espousals with her. For he became man for this end, which was a greater thing than his creating the world. For the Creator to *make* the creature was a great thing. But for him to *become* a creature was a greater thing. And he did a much greater thing still to obtain this joy; in that for this he laid down his life, and suffered even the death of the cross. For this he poured out his soul unto death. And he that is the Lord of the universe, God over all, blessed forevermore, offered up himself a sacrifice, in both body and soul, in the flames of divine wrath. Christ obtains his elect spouse by conquest. For she was a captive in the hands of dreadful enemies. And her Redeemer came into the world to conquer these enemies and rescue her out of their hands, that she might be his bride. And he came and encountered these enemies in the greatest battle that ever was beheld by men or angels. He fought with principalities and powers. He fought alone with the powers of darkness and all the armies of hell. Yea, he conflicted with the infinitely more dreadful wrath of God, and overcame in this great battle. And thus he obtained his spouse. Let us consider at how great a price Christ purchased his spouse. He did not redeem her with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. Yea, he gave himself for

her. When he offered up himself to God in those extreme labors and sufferings, this was the joy that was set before him, that made him cheerfully to endure the cross, and despise the pain and shame in comparison of this joy; even that rejoicing over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride that the Father had promised him, and that he expected when he should present her to himself in perfect beauty and blessedness.

The prospect of this was what supported him in the midst of the dismal prospect of his sufferings, at which his soul was troubled. John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." These words show the conflict and distress of Christ's holy soul in the view of his approaching sufferings. But in the midst of his trouble, he was refreshed with the joyful prospect of the success of those sufferings, in bringing home his elect church to himself, signified by a voice from heaven, and promised by the Father. On which he says, in the language of triumph, verse 31, 32, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

And ministers of the gospel are appointed to be the instruments of bringing this to pass, the instruments of bringing home his elect spouse to him, and her becoming his bride. And [they are] instruments of her sanctifying and cleansing by the word, that she might be meet to be presented to him on the future glorious wedding day. How great a motive then is here to induce us who are called to be these instruments, to be faithful in our work, and most willingly labor and suffer, that Christ may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied! Shall Christ do such great things, and go through such great labors and sufferings to obtain this joy, and then honor us sinful worms, so as to employ us as his ministers and instruments to bring this joy to pass. And shall we be loath to labor and backward to deny ourselves for this end?

Second, let us consider how much the manner in which Christ employs us in this great business has to engage us to a faithful performance of it. We are sent forth as his servants. But it is as highly dignified servants, as stewards of his household, as Abraham's servant, and as his ambassadors, to stand in his stead, and in his name, and represent his

person in so great an affair as that of his espousals with the eternally beloved of his soul. Christ employs us not as mere servants, but as friends of the bridegroom; agreeable to the style in which John the Baptist speaks of himself, John 3:29; in which he probably alludes to an ancient custom among the Jews at their nuptial solemnities, at which one of the guests that was most honored and next in dignity to the bridegroom, was styled *the friend of the bridegroom*.

There is not an angel in heaven, of how high an order soever, but what looks on himself honored by the Son of God and Lord of glory, in being employed by him as his minister in the high affair of his espousals with his blessed bride. But such honor has Christ put upon us, that his spouse should in some sort be ours. That we should marry, as a young man marries a virgin, the same mystical person that he himself will rejoice over as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. That we should be his ministers to treat and transact for him with his dear spouse, that he might obtain this joy. And, in our treaty with her, to be married to her in his name, and sustain an image of his own endearing relation to her. And that she should receive us, in some sort, as himself, and her heart be united to us in esteem, honor, and affection, as those that represent him. And that Christ's and the church's children should be ours, and that the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul should be also the fruit of the travail of our souls, as the apostle speaks of himself as travailing in birth with his hearers, Gal. 4:19. The reason why Christ puts such honor on faithful ministers, even above the angels themselves, is because they are of his beloved church, they are select members of his dear spouse, and Christ esteems nothing too much, no honor too great, for her. Therefore Jesus Christ, the King of angels and men, does as it were cause it to be proclaimed concerning faithful ministers, as Ahasuerus did concerning him that brought up Esther, his beloved queen; "Thus shall it be done to the man that the king delights to honour."

And seeing Christ has so honored us, that our relation to his people resembles his, surely our affection to them should imitate his, in seeking their salvation, spiritual peace, and happiness. Our tender care, labors, self-denial, and readiness to suffer for their happiness should imitate what has appeared in him, who has purchased them with his own blood.

Third, let it be considered that if we faithfully acquit ourselves in our office, in the manner that has been represented, we shall surely hereafter be partakers of the joy when the bridegroom and bride shall rejoice in each other in perfect and eternal glory.

God once gave forth a particular command, with special solemnity, that it should be written for the notice of all professing Christians through all ages, that they are happy and blessed indeed, who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Rev. 19:9, "And he saith unto me, Write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." But if we are faithful in our work, we shall surely be the subjects of that blessedness. We shall be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom and bride, not merely as friends and neighbors that are invited to be occasional guests, but as members of the one and the other. We shall be partakers with the church, the blessed bride, in her joy in the bridegroom, not only as friends and ministers to the church, but as members of principal dignity; as the eye, the ear, the hand, are principal members of the body. Faithful ministers in the church will hereafter be a part of the church that shall receive distinguished glory at the resurrection of the just, which, above all other times, may be looked on as the church's wedding day. Dan. 12:2, 3, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." They are elders who are represented as that part of the church triumphant that sit next to the throne of God. Rev. 4:4, "And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

And we shall also be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom in his rejoicing over his bride. We, as the special friends of the bridegroom, shall stand by, and hear him express his joy on that day, and rejoice greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. As John the Baptist said of himself, John 3:29, "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." Christ, in reward for our

faithful service, in winning and espousing his bride to him, and bringing her up from her minority, and adorning her for him, will then call us to partake with him in the joy of his marriage. And she that will then be his joy, shall also be our crown of rejoicing. 1 Thes. 2:19, “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” What a joyful meeting had Christ and his disciples together, when the disciples returned to their master, after the faithful and successful performance of their appointed service, when Christ sent them forth to preach the gospel. Luke 10:17, “And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Here we see how thy rejoice. The next words show how Christ also rejoiced on that occasion: “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” And in the next verse but two, we are told, that “in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” So if we faithfully acquit ourselves, we shall another day return to him with joy. And we shall rejoice with him and he with us. — Then will be the day when Christ, who has sown in tears and in blood, and we who have reaped the fruits of his labors and sufferings, shall rejoice together, agreeable to John 4:35-37. And that will be a happy meeting indeed, when Christ and his lovely and blessed bride, and faithful ministers who have been the instruments of wooing and winning her heart to him, and adorning her for him, and presenting her to him, shall all rejoice together.

Fourth, further to stir us up to faithfulness in the great business that is appointed us, in order to the mutual joy of this bridegroom and bride, let us consider what reason we have to hope that the time is approaching when this joy shall be to a glorious degree fulfilled on earth, far beyond whatever yet has been. I mean the time of the church’s latter-day glory. This is what the words of our text have a more direct respect to. And this is what is prophesied of in Hos. 2:19, 20. “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.” And this is what is especially intended by the marriage of the Lamb in Rev. 19.

We are sure this day will come. And we have many reasons to think that it is approaching. From the fulfillment of almost everything that the prophecies speak of as preceding it, and their having been fulfilled now a long time. And from the general earnest expectations of the church of God, and the best of her ministers and members, and the late extraordinary things that have appeared in the church of God, and appertaining to the state of religion, and the present aspects of divine Providence, which the time will not allow me largely to insist upon.

As the happiness of that day will have a great resemblance of the glory and joy of the eternal wedding day of the church after the resurrection of the just, so will the privileges of faithful ministers at that time much resemble those they shall enjoy with the bridegroom and bride, as to honor and happiness, in eternal glory. This is the time especially intended in the text, wherein it is said, "as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." And it is after in the prophecies spoken of as a great part of the glory of that time, that then the church should be so well supplied with faithful ministers. So in the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, that shall never hold their peace, day nor night." So, Isa. 30:20, 21, "Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Jer. 3:15, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." And chap. 23:4, "And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them." And the great privilege and joy of faithful ministers at that day is foretold in Isa. 52:8, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall the sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

And as that day must needs be approaching, and we ourselves have lately seen some things which we have reason to hope are forerunners of it, certainly it should strongly excite his to endeavor to be such pastors as God has promised to bless his church with at that time. That if any of us should live to see the dawning of that glorious day, we might share in the blessedness of it, and then be called, as the friends of the bridegroom, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and partake of that joy in which heaven

and earth, angels and saints, and Christ and his church, shall be united at that time.

But here I would apply the exhortation in a few words to that minister of Christ, who above all others is concerned in the solemnity of this day, who is now to be united to and set over this people as their pastor.

You have now heard, Reverend Sir, the great importance and high ends of the office of an evangelical pastor, and the glorious privileges of such as a faithful in this office, imperfectly represented. may God grant that your union with this people, this day, as their pastor, may be such, that God's people here may have the great promise God makes to his church in the text, now fulfilled unto them. May you now, as one of the precious sons of Zion, take this part of Christ's church by the hand, in the name of your great Master the glorious bridegroom, with a heart devoted unto him with true adoration and supreme affection, and for his sake knit to this people, in a spiritual and pure love, and as it were a conjugal tenderness, ardently desiring that great happiness for them, which you have now heard Christ has chosen his church unto, and has shed his blood to obtain for her, being yourself ready to spend and be spent for them, remembering the great errand on which Christ sends you to them, *viz*. to woo and win their hearts, and espouse their souls to him, and to bring up his elect spouse, and to fit and adorn her for his embraces; that you may in due time present her a chaste virgin to him, for him to rejoice over, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. How honorable is this business that Christ employs you in! And how joyfully should you perform it! When Abraham's faithful servant was sent to take a wife for his master's son, how engaged was he in the business; and how joyful was he when he succeeded! With what joy did he bow his head and worship, and bless the Lord God of his master, for his mercy and his truth in making his way prosperous! And what a joyful meeting may we conclude he had with Isaac, when he met him in the field, by the well of Laharoi, and there presented his beauteous Rebekah to him, and told him all things that he had done! But this was but a shadow of that joy that you shall have, if you imitate his fidelity, in the day when you shall meet your glorious Master, and present Christ's church in this place, as a chaste and beautiful virgin unto him.

We trust, dear Sir, that you will esteem it a most blessed employment, to spend your time and skill in adorning Christ's bride for her marriage with the Lamb, and that it is work which you will do with delight. And that you will take heed that the ornaments you put upon her are of the right sort, what shall be indeed beautiful and precious in the eyes of the bridegroom, that she may be all glorious within, and her clothing of wrought gold, that on the wedding-day she may stand on the king's right hand in gold of Ophir.

The joyful day is coming, when the spouse of Christ shall be led to the King in raiment of needlework. And angels and faithful ministers will be the servants that shall lead her in. And you, Sir, if you are faithful in the charge now to be committed to you, shall be joined with glorious angels in that honorable and joyful service. But with this difference, that you shall have the higher privilege. Angels and faithful ministers shall be together in bringing in Christ's bride into his palace, and presenting her to him. But faithful ministers shall have a much higher participation of the joy of that occasion. They shall have a greater and more immediate participation with the bride in her joy; for they shall not only be ministers to the church as the angels are, but parts of the church, principal members of the bride. And as such, at the same time that angels do the part of ministering spirits to the bride, when they conduct her to the bridegroom, they shall also do the part of ministering spirits to faithful ministers. And they shall also have a higher participation with the bridegroom than the angels, in his rejoicing at that time. For they shall be nearer to him than they. They are also his members, and are honored as the principal instruments of espousing the saints to him, and fitting them for his enjoyment; and therefore they will be more the crown of rejoicing of faithful ministers, than of the angels of heaven.

So great, dear Sir, is the honor and joy that is set before you, to engage you to faithfulness in your pastoral care of this people; so glorious the prize that Christ has set up to engage you to run the race that is set before you.

I would now conclude with a few words to the people of this

congregation, whose souls are now to be committed to the care of that minister of Christ, whom they have chosen as their pastor.

Let me take occasion, dear brethren, from what has been said, to exhort you — not forgetting the respect, honor, and reverence, that will ever be due from you to your former pastor, who has served you so long in that work, but by reason of age and growing infirmities, and the prospect of his place being so happily supplied by a successor, has seen meet to relinquish the burden of the pastoral charge over you — to perform the duties that belong to you, in your part of that relation and union now to be established between you and your elect pastor. Receive him as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, one that in his office represents the glorious bridegroom of the church. Love and honor him, and willingly submit yourselves to him, as a virgin when married to a husband. Surely the feet of that messenger should be beautiful, that comes to you on such a blessed errand as that which you have heard, to espouse you to the eternal Son of God, and to fit you for and lead you to him as your bridegroom. Your chosen pastor comes to you on this errand, and he comes in the name of the bridegroom, so empowered by him, and representing him, that in receiving him, you will receive Christ, and in rejecting him, you will reject Christ.

Be exhorted to treat your pastor as the beautiful and virtuous Rebekah treated Abraham's servant. She most charitably and hospitably entertained him, provided lodging and food for him and his company, and took care that he should be comfortably entertained and supplied in all respects, while he continued in his embassy. And that was the note or mark of distinction which God himself gave him, by which he should know the true spouse of Isaac from all others of the daughters of the city. Therefore in this respect approve yourselves as the true spouse of Christ, by giving kind entertainment to your minister that comes to espouse you to the antitype of Isaac. Provide for his outward subsistence and comfort, with the like cheerfulness that Rebekah did for Abraham's servant. You have an account of her alacrity and liberality in supplying him, in Gen. 24:18 etc. say, as her brother did, verse 31, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord."

Thus you should entertain your pastor. But this is not that wherein your

duty towards him chiefly lies. The main thing is to comply with him in his great errand and to yield to the suit that he makes to you in the name of Christ, to be his bride. In this you should be like Rebekah. She was, from what she heard of Isaac and God's covenant with him and blessing upon him from the mouth of Abraham's servant, willing forever to forsake her own country and her father's house to go into a country she had never seen to be Isaac's wife, whom also she never saw. After she had heard what the servant had to say, and her old friends had a mind she should put off the affair for the present — but it was insisted on that she should go immediately — and she was asked 'whether she would go with this man," she said, "I will go:" and she left her kindred, and followed the man through all that long journey, till he had brought her unto Isaac, and they three had that joyful meeting in Canaan. If you will this day receive your pastor in that union that is now to be established between him and you, it will be a joyful day in this place, and the joy will be like the joy of espousals, as when a young man marries a virgin. And it will not only be a joyful day in East Hampton, but it will doubtless be a joyful day in heaven on your account. And your joy will be a faint resemblance, and a forerunner of that future joy, when Christ shall rejoice over you as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride in heavenly glory.

And if your pastor be faithful in his office and you hearken and yield to him in that great errand on which Christ sends him to you, the time will come wherein you and your pastor will be each other's crown of rejoicing, and wherein Christ and he and you shall all meet together at the glorious marriage of the Lamb, and shall rejoice in and over one another with perfect, uninterrupted, never ending, and never fading joy.

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Dishonesty
or
The Sin of Theft and of Injustice

Subject: An unjust usurping of our neighbor's property without his consent is forbidden by the eighth commandment.

This is one of the ten commandments which constitute a summary of man's duty, as revealed by God. God made many revelations to the children of Israel in the wilderness by Moses. But this made in the ten commandments is the chief. Most of those other revelations contained ceremonial or judicial laws; but this contains the moral law. The most of those other laws respected the Jewish nation; but here is a summary of laws binding on all mankind. Those were to last till Christ should come, and have set up the Christian church. These are of perpetual obligation, and last to the end of the world. God everywhere, by Moses and the prophets, manifests a far greater regard to the duties of these commands than to any of the rites of the ceremonial law.

These commands were given at Mount Sinai, before any of the precepts of the ceremonial or judicial laws. They were delivered by a great voice out of the midst of fire, which made all the people in the camp tremble, and afterwards were engraven on tables of stone, and laid up in the ark; the first table containing the four first commandments; which teach our duty to God; the second table containing the six last, which teach our duty to man. The sum of the duties of the first table is contained in that which Christ says is the first and great commandment of the law; Mat. 22:37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The sum of what is required in the second table, is what Christ calls the second command, like unto the first; verse 39, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Of the commands of this second table of the law, the first (which is the *fifth* of the ten), refers to that *honor* which is due to our neighbor; the second respects his *life;* the third his *chastity*; the fourth his *estate;* the

fifth his good *name;* the sixth and last respects his *possessions* and enjoyments in general. It is that command which respects our neighbor's *estate,* and which is the fourth command of the second table, and the eighth of the whole decalogue, on which I am now to insist. And here I shall make the command itself, as the words of it lie before us in the decalogue, my subject: and as the words of the commandment are in the form of a prohibition, forbidding a certain kind of sin. So I shall consider particularly what it is that this command forbids. The sin that is forbidden in this command is called *stealing*; yet we cannot reasonably understand it only of that act, which in the more ordinary and strict sense of the word, is called stealing. But the iniquity which this command forbids, may be summarily expressed thus: — *An unjust usurping of our neighbor's property, without his consent.*

So much is doubtless comprehended in the text; yet this comprehends much more than is implied in the ordinary use of the word, *stealing*; which is only a secret taking of that which is another's from his possession, without either his consent or knowledge. But the ten commands are not to be limited to the strictest sense of the words, but are to be understood in such a latitude, as to include all things that are of that nature or kind. Hence Christ reproves the Pharisees' interpretation of the sixth command, Mat. 5:21, 22; and also their interpretation of the seventh command; see verse 27, 28; by which it appears that the commands are not to be understood as forbidding only these individual sins, which are expressly mentioned, in the strictest sense of the expressions; but all other things of the same nature or kind. — Therefore, what is forbidden in this command is all unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property. Here it may be observed, that an unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property is twofold; it may be, either by *withholding* what is our neighbor's, or by *taking* it from him.

SECTION I

The dishonesty of withholding what is our neighbor's.

There are many ways in which persons may unjustly usurp their neighbor's property, by withholding what is his due. But I shall particularize only two things.

First, the unfaithfulness of men in *not fulfilling their engagements*. Ordinarily when men promise anything to their neighbor, or enter into engagements by undertaking any business with which their neighbor entrust them, their engagements invest their neighbor with a right to that which is engaged; so that if they withhold it, they usurp that which belongs to their neighbor. So, when men break their promises, because they find them to be inconvenient, and they cannot fulfill them without difficulty and trouble; or merely because they have altered their minds since they promised. They think they have not consulted their own interest in the promise which they have made, and that if they had considered the matter as much before they promised as they have since, they should not have promised. Therefore they take the liberty to set their own promises aside. Besides, sometimes persons violate this command, by neglecting to fulfill their engagements, through a careless, negligent spirit.

They violate this command, in withholding what belongs to their neighbor, when they are not faithful in any business which they have undertaken to do for their neighbor. If their neighbor [has] hired them to labor for him for a certain time, and they be not careful well to husband the time; if they be hired to a day's labor, and be not careful to improve the day, as they have reason to think that he who hired justly expected of them; or if they be hired to accomplish such a piece of work, and be not careful to do it well, do it not as if it were for themselves, or as they would have others do for them, when they in like manner betrust them with any business of theirs; or if they be entrusted with any particular affair, which they undertake, but use not that care, contrivance, and diligence, to manage it so as will be to the advantage of him who entrusts them, and as they would manage it, or would insist that it should be managed, if the affair was their own: in all these cases the unjustly withhold what belongs to their neighbor.

Second, another way in which men unjustly withhold what is their neighbor's is *in neglecting to pay their debts*. Sometimes this happens, because they run so far into debt that they cannot reasonably hope to be able to pay their debts; and this they do, either through pride and affectation of living above their circumstances, or through a grasping,

covetous disposition, or some other corrupt principle. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts from carelessness of spirit about it, little concerning themselves whether they are paid or not, taking no care to go to their creditor, or to send to him. And if they see him from time to time, they say nothing about their debts. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, because it would put them to some inconvenience. The reason why they do it not, is not because they cannot do it, but because they cannot do it so conveniently as they desire. And so they rather choose to put their creditor to inconvenience by being without what properly belongs to him, than to put themselves to inconvenience by being without what doth not belong to them, and what they have no right to detain. In any of these cases they unjustly usurp the property of their neighbor.

Sometimes persons have that by them with which they could pay their debts if they would. But they want to lay out their money for something else, to buy gay clothing for their children, or to advance their estates, or for some such end. They have other designs in hand, which must fail, if they pay their debts. When men thus withhold what is due, they unjustly usurp what is not their own. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, and their excuse for it is that their creditor doth not need it; that he hath a plentiful estate, and can well bear to lie out of his money. But if the creditor be ever so rich, that gives no right to the debtor to withhold from him that which belongs to him. If it be due, it ought to be paid. For that is the very notion of its being due. It is no more lawful to withhold from a man what is his due, without his consent, because he is rich and able to do without it, than it is lawful to steal from a man because he is rich, and able to bear the loss.

SECTION II

The dishonesty of unjustly taking a neighbor's property.

The principal ways of doing this seem to be these four, by negligence, by fraud, by violence, or by stealing strictly so called.

First, the first way of unjustly depriving our neighbor of that which is his, is by *negligence,* by carelessly neglecting that which is expected by neighbors, one of another, and is necessary to prevent our neighbor's

suffering in his estate by us, or by anything that is ours: and necessary in order that neighbors may live one by another, without suffering in their lawful interests, rights, and possessions, one by another.

For instance, when proper care is not taken by men to prevent their neighbor's suffering in the produce of his fields or enclosures, from their cattle, or other brute creatures; which may be either through negligence with regard to their creatures themselves, in keeping those that are unruly, and giving them their liberty, though they know that they are not fit to have their liberty, and are commonly wont to break into their neighbor's enclosures greatly to his damage; or through a neglect of that which is justly expected of them, to defend others' fields from suffering by the neighborhood of their own. In such cases men are guilty of unjustly taking from their neighbor what is his property.

It is said in the law of Moses, Exo. 22:5, "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his vineyard, shall he make restitution." Now a man may be unjustly the cause of his neighbor's field or vineyard being eaten, either by putting in his beast, and so doing what he should not do; or by neglecting to do what he should do, to prevent his beast from getting into his field. What is said in the 144th Psalm, and two last verses, supposes that a people who carry themselves as becomes a people whose God is the Lord, will take thorough care that beasts do not break into their neighbor's enclosures. "That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be *no breaking in,* nor *going out;* that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Second, taking away that which is our neighbor's by *fraud*, or by deceiving him, is another mode of usurping our neighbor's property. This is the case when men in their dealings take advantage of their neighbor's ignorance, or oversight, or mistake, to get something from him; or when they make their gains, by concealing the defects of what they sell, putting off bad for good, though this be not done by speaking falsely, but only by keeping silence. Or when they take a higher price than what they sell is really worth, and more than they could get for it if the concealed defects

were known. Or when they sell that for good, which indeed is not merchantable, which is condemned in Amos 8:6, “Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat.”

If a man puts off something to another with defects that are concealed, knowing that the other receives it as good, and pays such a price for it, under a notion of its having no remarkable defect but what he sees, and takes the price which the buyer under that notion offers; the seller knows that he takes a price of the buyer for that which the buyer had not of him; for the buyer is deceived, and pays for those things which he finds wanting in what he buys. It is just the same thing, as if a man should take a payment that another offers him, through a mistake, for that which he never had of him, thinking that he had it of him, when he had it not.

So a man fraudulently takes away that which is his neighbor’s, when he gets his money from him by falsely commending what he hath to sell, above what he knows to be the true quality of it; and attributes those good qualities to it which he knows it has not. Or if he does not that, yet sets forth the good qualities in a degree beyond what he knows to be the true degree; or speaks of the defects and ill qualities of what he has to sell, as if they were much less than he knows they are. Or on the contrary, when the buyer will cry down what he is about to buy, contrary to his real opinion of the value of it. — These things, however common they be in men’s dealings one with another, are nothing short of iniquity, and *fraud,* and a great breach of this commandment, upon which we are discoursing. Pro. 20:14, “It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boasteth.” — Many other ways there are whereby men deceive one another in their trading, and whereby they fraudulently and unjustly take away that which is their neighbor’s.

Third, another mode of unjustly invading and taking away our neighbor’s property, is by *violence*. This violence may be done in different degrees. — Men may take away their neighbor’s goods either by mere open violence, either making use of superior strength, forcibly taking away anything that is his; or by express or implicit threatenings forcing him to yield up what he has into their hands; as is done in open robbery and piracy. Or, by making use of some advantages which they have over their neighbor, in their dealings with him, constrain him to yield to their

gaining unreasonably of him; as when they take advantage of their neighbor's poverty to extort unreasonably from him for those things that he is under a necessity of procuring for himself or family. This is an oppression against which God hath shown a great displeasure in his word. Lev. 25:14, "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour, ye shall not oppress one another." Pro. 22:22, 23, "Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them." And Amos 4:1, 2, "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mount of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, the Lord hath sworn in his holiness, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks."

When the necessity of poor indigent people is the very thing whence others take occasion to raise the price of provisions, even above the market; this is such an oppression. There are many poor people whose families are in such necessity of bread, that they in their extremity will give almost any price for it, rather than go without it. Those who have to sell, though hereby they have an advantage in their hands, yet surely should not take the advantage to raise the price of provisions. We should doubtless think we had just cause to complain, if we were in such necessity as they are, and were reduced to their straits, and were treated in this manner. And let us remember, that it is owing only to the distinguishing goodness of God to us, that we are not in their circumstances. And whatever our present circumstances are, yet we know not but that the time may still come when their case may be ours.

Men may oppress others, though they be not poor, if they will take advantage of any particular necessities of their neighbor, unreasonably to extort from him. The case may be so at particular seasons, that those who are not poor, may stand in particular and extraordinary need of what we have, or what we can do for them. So that it would be greatly to their disadvantage or loss to be without it. Now to take advantage of their urgent circumstances, to get from them an unreasonable price, is a violent dealing with our neighbors.

It is very unreasonable to say, Such men are so rich, and get money so much more easily than I, that it is no hurt for me to take advantage when

they are in special need, and make them give me, for work that I do for them, a great deal more than I would desire to ask of other men. Let such consider, whether, if they should by any means hereafter get forward in the world, and come to have plentiful estates, they would like that persons should act upon such principles towards them. That men are rich, gives us no more right to take away from them what is theirs in this way, than it does to steal from them because they come easily by their property, and can do without it better than we.

Again, another thing that is a kind of violent taking from our neighbor what is his, is taking the advantage of the law to gain from others, when their cause in honesty and conscience is just and good. The circumstances of mankind, their rights, possessions, and dealings one with another, are so various, that it is impossible that any body of human laws should be contrived to suit all possible cases and circumstances. Hence the best laws may be abused and perverted to purposes contrary to the general design of laws, which is to maintain the rights and secure the properties of mankind. Human laws have a regard due to them, but always in subordination to the higher laws of God and nature. Therefore when it so happens, that we have an advantage by the law, to gain what the laws of moral honesty allow not, it is an oppression and violence to take the advantage. That human laws allow it, will not excuse us before God, the Judge of the world, who will judge us another day by his own laws and not by the laws of the commonwealth.

Fourth, the fourth way of unjustly taking from our neighbor that which is his, is *stealing* so called. All unjust ways of taking away, or invading, or usurping what is our neighbor's, are called stealing in the most extensive use of the word, and all in included in the expression in this command. Yet the word stealing, as it is more commonly used, is not of so great extent, and intends not all unjust invasion of our neighbor's property, but only a particular kind of unjust taking. So that in common speech when we speak of fraudulent dealings, of extortion, unfaithfulness in our trust, and of stealing, we understand different sins by these expressions, though they are an usurpation of what is our neighbor's.

Stealing, strictly so called, may be thus defined. *A designed taking of our neighbor's goods from him, without his consent or knowledge.* It is not

merely a withholding of what is our neighbor's, but a taking away. And therein it differs from unfaithfulness in our undertakings and betrustments, and also from negligence in the payment of debts. It is a designed or willful depriving of our neighbor of what is his, and so differs from wronging our neighbor in his estate through carelessness or negligence. It is taking of our neighbor's goods without his knowledge. It is a private, clandestine taking away, and so differs from robbery by open violence.

So also it differs from extortion, for in that the person knows what is taken from him. The aim of him that takes is no other than that he should know it; for he makes use of other means than his ignorance, to obtain what is his neighbors, *viz.* violence to constrain him to give it up. So also it differs from fraudulent dealing or trading. For though in fraudulent dealing, the lawful possessor doth not understand the ways and means, by which he parts with his goods, and by which his neighbor becomes possessed of them; yet he knows the *fact;* the deceiver designedly conceals the *manner* only. But in stealing, strictly so called, he that takes, intends not that it shall be *known* that he takes. It also differs from extortion and fraudulent dealing, in that it is wholly without the consent of the owner. For in extortion, though there be no free consent; yet the consent of the owner is in some sort gained, though by oppressive means. So in fraudulent dealing consent is in some sort obtained, though it be by deceit. But in stealing no kind of consent is obtained.

A person may steal from another, yet not take his goods without the knowledge of the owner; because he may know of it accidentally, he may see what is done, unawares to the thief. Therefore I have defined stealing, a designed taking without the consent or knowledge of the owner. If it be accidentally known, yet it is not known in the design and intention of the thief. The thief is so far at least private in it, that he gives no notice to the owner at the time. It must be also without the consent of the owner. A person may take without the knowledge of the owner, and yet not take without his consent. The owner may not know of his taking at the time, or of his taking any particular things; yet there may be his implicit consent. There may have been a general consent, if not expressed, yet implied. The circumstances of the affair may be such, that his consent may well be

presumed upon, either from an established custom, allowed by all, or from the nature of the case; the thing being of such a nature, that it may well be presumed that none would refuse their consent; as in the case of a person's accidentally passing through his neighbor's vineyard in Israel, and eating his fill of grapes; or from the circumstances of the persons, as is the case, in many instances, of the freedom which near neighbors and intimate friends often take, and of that boldness which they use with respect to each other's goods.

In all *such* cases, though the owner [does] not particularly know what is done, yet he that takes, does it not with any contrived designed concealment. And though there is no express, particular consent, yet there is a consent either implied, or justly presumed upon. And he that takes, doth not designedly do it without consent.

It may happen in some cases, that one may take the goods of another both without his knowledge and consent, either explicit or implicit, but through mistake; yet he may not be guilty of stealing. Therefore the *design* of him who takes must come into consideration. When he designedly takes away that which is his neighbor's, without his consent or knowledge, then he steals. So that if it should happen, that he has both his consent and knowledge, without his design, he steals. And if it so happen that he takes without either his neighbor's consent or knowledge, and yet without his own design, he steals not. I desire therefore that this, which I take to be the true definition of theft or stealing, may be borne in mind, *viz.* a designed taking of our neighbor's goods, without his consent or knowledge; because it is needful to clear up many things which I have yet to say on this subject.

SECTION III

Dishonest excuses.

Here I shall particularly take notice of some things, by which persons may be ready to excuse themselves, in privately taking their neighbor's good, which however cannot be a just excuse for it, nor will they make such a taking to be stealing.

First, that the person whose goods are privately taken, *owes* or is in debt to him that takes them. Some may be ready to say that they do not take that which is their neighbor's, they take that which is their own, because as much is due to them, their neighbor owes them as much, and unjustly detains it, and they know not whether ever they shall get their due of him. Their neighbor will not do them right, and therefore they must right themselves.

But such pleas as these will not justify a man in going in a private and clandestine manner to take away anything of his neighbor's from his possession, without his consent or knowledge; his doing this is properly stealing. For though something of his neighbor's, which is as valuable as what he takes, may be due to him; that doth not give him such a right to his neighbor's goods, that he may take anything that is his, according to his own pleasure, and at what time and in what manner he pleases. That his neighbor is in debt to him, doth not give him a right to take it upon himself to be his own judge, so that he may judge for himself, which of his neighbor's goods shall be taken from him to discharge the debt; and that he may act merely according to his own private judgment and pleasure in such a case, without so much as acquainting his neighbor with the affair.

In order to warrant such a proceeding as this, everything that his neighbor has, must be his. A man may not take indifferently what he pleases out of a number of goods, without the consent or knowledge of any other person, unless all is his own, to be disposed of as he pleases. Such a way of using goods according to our own pleasure, taking what we will, and at what time we will, can be warranted by nothing but a dominion over the whole. And though he who is in debt may be guilty of great injustice in detaining what is due to another; yet it doth not thence follow, but that he that takes from him, may also be guilty of great injustice towards him. The course he takes to right himself may be very irregular and unreasonable; and such a course, that if universally allowed and pursued in such cases, would throw human society into confusion.

When men obtain a property in any of the professions of this life, they are at the same time also invested with a right to retain a possession of them, till they are deprived of them in some fair and regular proceeding. Every man has a right to hold his estate, and keep possession of his properties,

so that no other can lawfully use them as his own, until he either parts with them of his own accord, or until it be taken from him according to some established rule, in a way of open justice. Therefore he who, under pretense of having just demands upon his neighbor, privately takes his goods without his consent, takes them unjustly, and is guilty of stealing.

Second, much less will it make such a private taking not to be stealing, that he who takes, has, in way of kindness or gift, done for the person from whom he takes, as much is equivalent to the *value* of what he takes. If a man do his neighbor some considerable kindness, whether in labor, or in something that he gives him, what he does or gives is supposed to be done voluntarily, and he is not to make his neighbor debtor for it. And therefore if anything be privately taken away, upon any such consideration, it is gross stealing.

For instance, when any person needs to have any services done for him, where a considerable number of hands are necessary; it is common for the neighborhood to meet together and join in helping their neighbor, and frequently some provision is made for their entertainment. If any person who hath assisted on such an occasion, and is a partaker at such an entertainment, shall think within himself, the service I have done is worth a great deal more than what I shall eat and drink here, and therefore shall take liberty privately to take of the provision set before him, to carry away with him, purposely concealing the matter from him who hath entertained him, this is gross stealing. And it is a very ridiculous plea which they make to excuse so unmanly and vile an act.

Persons in such cases may say to themselves, that the provision is made for them, and set before them; that it is a time wherein considerable liberty is given, and they think, seeing they have done so much for their host, they may take something more than they eat and drink there. But then let them be open in it; let them acquaint those with it who make the entertainment; and let it not be done in any wise, in a secret, clandestine manner, with the least design or attempt to avoid their notice. On the contrary, let care be taken to give them notice and obtain their consent.

When persons do such things in a private manner, they condemn themselves by their own act. Their doing what they do secretly, shows

that they are conscious to themselves, that they go beyond what it is expected they should do, and do what would not be allowed, if it were known. Such an act, however light they may make of it, is abominable theft, and what any person of religion or any sense of the dignity of their own nature, would to the greatest degree abhor and detest.

Third, it is not sufficient to make a private taking without consent not to be stealing, that it is but a small matter that is taken. If the thing be of little value, yet if it be worth a purposed concealing from the owner, the value is great enough to render the taking of it proper theft. If it be pretended that the thing is of so small consequence, that it is not worth asking for; then surely it is not worth a purposed concealing from the owner, when it is taken. He who, under this pretense, conceals his taking, in the very act contradicts his own pretense; for his action shows that he apprehends, or at least suspects, that, as small a matter as it is, the owner would not like the taking of it, if he knew it; otherwise the taker would not desire to conceal it.

The owner of the goods, and not other people, is the proper judge, whether what he owns be of such a value, that it is worth his while to keep it, and to refuse his consent to the taking of it from him. He who possesses, and not he who takes away, has a right to judge of what consequence his possessions are to him. He has a right to set what value he pleases on them, and to treat them according to that value. Besides, merely that a thing is of small value, cannot give a right to others, purposely and designedly to take it away, without the knowledge or consent of the owner. Because if this only gives a right, then all have a right to take things of small value; and at this rate a great number of persons, each of them taking from a man that which is of small value, might take away all he has.

Therefore, it will not justify persons, in purposely taking such things as fruit from the trees, or gardens, or fields of their neighbors, without their knowledge or consent, that the things which they take are things of small value. Nor is that sufficient to render such an act not an act of theft properly so called. This shows also that the smallness of the value of what is privately taken at feasts and entertainments, doth not render the taking of such things not stealing.

The small value of a thing may in some cases justify an occasional taking of things, so far as we may from thence, and from what is generally allowed, reasonably presume that the owner gives his consent. But if that be the case, and persons really take, as supposing that the owner consents to such occasional taking, then he that takes will not at all endeavor to do what he does secretly, nor in any measure to avoid notice. But merely the smallness of the value of a thing, can never justify a secret taking of what is another's.

SECTION IV

The subject applied. — The dishonest warned.

The first use I would make of this doctrine, is to *warn* against all injustice and dishonesty, as to what appertains to our neighbor's temporal goods or possessions. Let me warn all to avoid all ways of unjustly invading or usurping what is their neighbor's, and let me press that exhortation of the apostle, Rom. 12:17, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" which implies, that those things which we provide for ourselves, and use as our own, should be such as we come honestly by; and especially that we should avoid all clandestine or *underhand* ways of obtaining anything that is our neighbor's, either by fraudulent dealing, or by that taking without our neighbor's knowledge and consent, of which we have been speaking.

I warn you to beware of dishonesty in withholding what is your neighbor's, either by unfaithfulness to your trust in any business which you undertake, or by withholding your neighbor's just and honest dues. Consider that saying of the apostle, Rom. 13:8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Be also warned against wronging your neighbor or injuring him in his enclosures, or in any of his just rights and properties, through careless neglect of what is reasonably expected by neighbors one of another, in order that they may live one by another without mutual injury. Let all beware that they bring not guilt on their souls in the sight of God, by taking an advantage to oppress any person. Especially beware of taking advantage of others' poverty to extort from them. For God will defend their cause, and you will be no gainers by such

oppression.

Beware also of all injustice by deceitful and fraudulent dealing. You doubtless meet with abundance of temptation to fraud, and have need to keep a strong guard upon yourselves. There are many temptations to falsehood in trading, both about what you would buy and what you have to sell. There are, in buying, temptations to do as in Pro. 20:14, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer." There are many temptations to take indirect courses, to blind those with whom you deal, about the qualities of what you have to sell, to diminish the defects of your commodities, or to conceal them, and to put off things for good, which are bad. And there are doubtless many other ways that men meet with temptations to deceive others, which your own experience will better suggest to you than I can.

But here I shall take occasion to speak of a particular kind of fraud, which is very aggravated, and is rather a defrauding of God than man. What I mean is, *the giving of that which is bad for good in public contributions.* Though it be matter of great shame and lamentation that it should be so, yet it is to be feared, from what has sometimes been observed, that there are some who, when there is a public contribution to be made for the poor, or some other pious and charitable use, sometimes take that opportunity *to put off their bad money*. That which they find, or think, their neighbors will refuse to take at their hands, because they will have opportunity to see what is offered them, and to observe the badness of it, even *that* they therefore take opportunity to put off to God.

Hereby they endeavor to save their credit; for they apprehend that they shall be concealed. They appear with others to go to the contribution, as it is not known, but that they put in that which is good. But they cheat the church of God, and defraud the expectations of the poor, or rather, they lie to God, for those who receive what is given, stand as Christ's receivers, and not as acting for themselves in this matter.

They that do thus, do that which is very much of the same nature with that sin, against which God denounces that dreadful curse in Mal. 1:14, "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." *That hath in*

his flock a male, i.e. That has in his flock that which is good and fit to be offered to God. For it was the male of the flock principally that was appointed, in the law of Moses, to be offered in sacrifice. He has in his flock that which is good, but he vows and sacrifices to the Lord "the torn, the lame, and the sick." As it is said in the foregoing verse; ye said also, "Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? Saith the Lord."

Contributions in the Christian church come in the room of sacrifices in the Jewish church. Mercy comes in the room of sacrifice. And what is offered in the way of mercy is as much offered to God, as the sacrifices of old were. For what is done to the poor is done to Christ, and he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; Pro. 19:17. The Jews that offered the sick and lame of the flock, knew that if they had offered it to their governor, and had attempted to put it off, as part of the tribute or public taxes due to their earthly rulers, it would not be accepted, and therefore they were willing to put it off to God. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts."

So those persons who purposely put bad money into contributions, know that what they put in would not be accepted if they should offer to pay their public taxes. Yea, they know that their *neighbors* would not accept it at their hands; and therefore they are willing to save themselves, by putting it off to God.

This practice has also very much of the nature of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. What they offered was by way of contribution for charitable uses. The brethren sold what they had, and brought it into a common stock, and put all under the care of deacons, that the poor might every one be supplied. Ananias and Sapphira brought a part of their possessions, and put it into the common stock. And their sin was, that they put it in for more than it really was. It was but a part of what they had, and they put it in, and would have it accepted, as if it had been all. So those among us, of whom I am speaking, put off what they put into the

charitable stock, for more than it is. For they put it in, under the notion that it is something of some value. They intend it shall be so taken by the church that sees them go to the contribution, when indeed they put in nothing at all.

Ananias and Sapphira were charged with lying to God, and doing an act of fraud towards God himself, in what they did. Acts 5:4, "Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So those who knowingly put bad money for good into a contribution for a charitable use, as much as in them lies commit an act of fraud and deceit towards God. For the deacons who receive what is contributed, receive it not in their own names, but as Christ's receivers. I hope these things may be sufficient to deter every reader from ever daring to do such a thing for the future.

Again, another thing I would warn you against, is, stealing, properly and strictly so called; or designedly taking away any of your neighbor's goods without his consent or knowledge. And especially I would now take occasion to warn against a practice which is very common in the country, particularly among children and young people; and that is, stealing fruit from their neighbor's trees or enclosures. There is a licentious liberty taken by many children and young people, in making bold with their neighbor's fruit. And it is to be feared, that they are too much countenanced in it by their parents and many elder people.

I am sensible, that the great thing which is pleaded, and made very much the ground of this liberty which is taken and so much tolerated, is a very abusive and unreasonable construction and application of that text of Scripture in Deu. 23:24, "When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill. But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel." Because this text seems to be so much mistaken and misimproved, I shall therefore endeavor particularly to state the matter of persons taking their neighbor's fruit, and to set it in a just and clear light as concerning this text.

It was to eat their fill of grapes when they *occasionally* came into or passed through their neighbor's vineyard, and not that they should go

thither on *purpose* to eat grapes. This is manifest by the manner of expression; "*When thou comest* into thy neighbour's vineyard, thou mayest eat;" *i.e.* when thou art come thither on some other occasion. If God had meant to give them leave to come thither on purpose, for no other end, it would not have been expressed so; but rather thus, *Thou mayest come* into thy neighbour's vineyard, and eat grapes thy fill. — Such were the circumstances of that people, and vineyards among them were so common, that there was no danger that this liberty would be attended with ill consequence. It is manifest throughout the history of Israel, that vineyards among them were so common that the people in general had them. Every husbandman among them was a vine-dresser; and a great part of the business of a husbandman among them, consisted in dressing and taking care of his vineyards. Grapes seem to have been the most common sort of fruit that they had. Besides, there was no liberty given for persons to go on purpose to a vineyard to eat the fruit of it. So that there was no danger of neighbors suffering one by another, by any such liberty. — The liberty did not tend to any such consequence, as the flocking of a great number to eat grapes, whereby the fruit of the vineyard might be much diminished.

Such were the circumstances of the case, that the consent of the owners of vineyards in general might well be presumed upon, though no such express liberty had been given. You may remember that in the definition of stealing, I observed, that explicit consent is not always necessary; because the case may be so circumstanced, that consent may be well presumed on. And the reason why consent might well be presumed on in the case of eating grapes, of which we are now speaking, is, that there could be no sensible injury, nor any danger of any ill consequences, by which a man would sensibly suffer in the benefit of his vineyard. Hence it is the more easy to determine, what would and what would not be justified by this text, among us. Suppose a particular person among us had a vineyard of the same kind with those which the children of Israel had, it would not justify others in using the same liberty when occasionally passing through it; because it would be a rare thing, and the rarity and scarcity of the fruit would render it of much greater value. Besides, if one man [was] distinguished by such a possession, to allow of such a liberty would have a much greater tendency to ill consequences,

than if they were common, as they were in the land of Canaan. There would be danger of many persons falsely pretending, and making occasions, to pass through the vineyard, for the sake of such rare fruit.

Nor would it be a parallel case, if men in general among us had each of them a *few* vines. That would be a very different thing from persons in general having large vineyards. Nor would this text, in such a case, warrant men's eating their fill of grapes when occasionally passing by. — And though all in general had vineyards, as they had in the land of Canaan, this text would not justify men in going into their neighbor's vineyard on purpose to eat the fruit. No such liberty is given in the text. If there had been such liberty, it might have been of ill consequence. For the sake of saving their own grapes, men might make a practice of going and sending their children into their neighbor's vineyard, to eat their fill from time to time.

But the liberty given in this text to the children of Israel, seems to be very parallel with the liberty taken among us, to take up an apple or two and eat, as we are occasionally passing through a neighbor's orchard; which, as our circumstances are, we may do, and justly presume that we have the owner's consent. This is a liberty that we take, and find no ill consequences. It was very much so with vineyards in the land of Canaan, as it is with orchards among us. Apples in some countries are a rare fruit. And there it would by no means be warrantable for persons to take the same liberty when occasionally passing by their neighbor's apple tree, which we warrantably take here, when going through a neighbor's orchard.

The consideration of these things will easily show the great abuse that is made of this text, when it is brought to justify such a resorting of children and others to their neighbor's fruit trees, as is sometimes, on purpose to take and eat the fruit. Indeed this practice is not only not justified by the law of Moses, but it is in itself unreasonable, and contrary to the law of nature. The consequences of it are pernicious, so that a man can have no dependence on enjoying the fruit of his labor, or the benefit of his property in those things, which possibly he may very much value. He can have no assurance but that he shall be mainly deprived of what he has, and that others will not have the principal benefit of it; and so that his

end in planting and cultivating that from which he expected those fruits of the earth, which God hath given for the use, comfort, and delight of mankind, will not be in the main frustrated.

SECTION V

An exhortation to honesty.

Under this use, I shall confine myself to two particulars, many other things having been already spoken to.

First, I shall hence take occasion to exhort *parents* to restrain the children from stealing, and particularly from being guilty of theft in stealing the fruits of their neighbor's trees or fields. Christian parents are obliged to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But how much otherwise do they act, who bring them up in theft! And those parents are guilty of this, who — though they do not directly teach them to steal, by example and setting them about it, yet — *tolerate* them in it.

Parents should take effectual care, not only to instruct their children better, and to warn them against any such thievish practices, but also thoroughly to restrain them. Children who practice stealing, make themselves vile. Stealing, by the common consent of mankind, is a very vile practice. Therefore those parents that will not take thorough care to restrain their children from such a practice, will be guilty of the same sin which God so highly resented, and awfully punished, in Eli, of which we read, 1 Sam. 3:13, "For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

Second, I exhort those who are conscious in themselves that they have heretofore wronged their neighbor to make *restitution*. This is a duty the obligation to which is exceedingly plain. If a person was wronged in *taking* away anything that was his, certainly he is wronged also in *detaining it*. And all the while that a person, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, neglects to make restitution, he lives in that wrong. He not only lives impenitent as to that first wrong of which he was

guilty, but he *continually* wrongs his neighbor. A man who hath gotten anything from another wrongfully, *goes on* to wrong him every day that he neglects to restore it, when he has opportunity to do it. The person injured did not only suffer wrong from the other when his goods were first taken from him, but he suffers new injustice from him all the while they are unjustly kept from him.

Therefore I counsel you who are conscious that you have heretofore wronged your neighbor, either by fraud, or oppression, or unfaithfulness, or stealing, whether lately or formerly, though it may have been a great while ago, speedily to go and make restitution for all the wrong your neighbor has suffered at your hands. That it was done long ago, doth not quit you from obligation to restore. This is a duty with which you must comply; you cannot be acquitted without it. As long as you neglect it, it will be unreasonable in you to expect any forgiveness of God. For what ground can you have to think that God will pardon you, as long as you willfully continue in the same wrong, and wrong the same many still every day, by detaining from him that which is his? You in your prayers ask of God, that he would forgive all your sins; but your very prayers are mockery, if you still willfully continue in those sins. — Indeed, if you go and confess your faults to your neighbor, and he will freely acquit you from making restitution, you will be acquitted from the obligation. For in so doing, your neighbor gives you what before was his. But otherwise you cannot be acquitted.

I would leave this advice with all, for direction in their behavior on their deathbeds. Indeed you should not by any means put it off till you come to die; and you will run the most fearful risk in so doing. But if you will not do it now, while you are in health, I will leave it with you to remember, when you shall come to lie on your deathbeds. Doubtless, then if you have the use of your reason, you will be concerned for the salvation of your poor souls. And let this be one thing then remembered, as absolutely necessary in order to your salvation, that before you die, you must make restitution for whatever wrong you shall have done any of your neighbors; or at least leave orders that such restitution be made. Otherwise you will, as it were, go out of the world, and go before your great Judge, with stolen goods in your hands. And certainly it will not be

very comfortable or safe, to bring them into his infinitely holy and dreadful presence, when he sits on his throne of judgment, with his eyes as a flame of fire, being more pure than to look on iniquity; when he is about to sentence you to your everlasting unalterable state.

Everyone here present, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, and has not made restitution, must die. Let all such therefore remember this counsel now given them, on the day when death shall approach, if they shall be so foolish as to neglect it till that time.

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Christians a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, A Peculiar People

Subject: That true Christians are: I. A chosen generation. II. A royal priesthood. III. A holy nation. IV. A peculiar people.

The apostle in the preceding verses speaks of the great difference between Christians and unbelievers, on account of their diverse and opposite relations to Jesus Christ. The former have Christ for their foundation, they come to him as a living stone, a stone chosen of God, and precious; and they also as living stones are built up a spiritual house. The Christian church is the temple of God, and particular believers are the stones of which that temple is built. The stones of Solomon's temple, which were so curiously polished and well fitted for their places in that building, were a type of believers. And Christ is the foundation of this building, or the chief corner stone. On the contrary, to the latter, to unbelievers, Christ, instead of being a foundation on which they rest and depend, is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. Instead of being a foundation to support them and keep them from falling, he is an occasion of their stumbling and

falling.

And again, to believers Christ is a precious stone: “Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.” But to unbelievers he is a stone that is disallowed, and rejected, and set at nought. They set light by him, as by the stones of the street. They make no account of him, and they disallow him. When they come to build, they cast this stone away as being of no use, not fit for a foundation, and not fit for a place in their building. In the eighth verse the apostle tells the Christians to whom he writes, that those unbelievers who thus reject Christ, and to whom he is a stone of stumbling, and rock of offense, were appointed to this. “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.” It was appointed that they should stumble at the word that Christ should be an occasion not of their salvation, but of their deeper damnation. And then in our text, he puts the Christians in mind how far otherwise God had dealt with them, than with those reprobates. They were a chosen generation. God had rejected the others in his eternal counsels, but themselves he had chosen from eternity. They were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

As God distinguished the people of Israel of old from all other nations, so he distinguishes true Christians. It is probable the apostle had in his mind some expressions that are used in the Old Testament, concerning the people of Israel. Christians are said here to be a chosen generation, according to what was said of Israel of old. Deu. 10:15, “Only the Lord thy God had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.” Christians are here said to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, agreeable to what was said of old of Israel, Exo. 19:5, 6, “Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

But there is something further said here of Christians than there of Israel. There, it is promised to Israel that if they obey, they shall be *a kingdom of priests*. But here, Christians are said to be *a priesthood of kings*, or a

royal priesthood. They are a priesthood, and they are also kings.

I propose to insist distinctly upon the several propositions contained in the words of the text.

I. True Christians are *a chosen generation*. Two things are here implied.

First, that true Christians are chosen by God from the rest of the world, to be his.

Second, that God's people are of a peculiar descent and pedigree, different from all the world besides.

First, true Christians are chosen by God from the rest of the world.

God does not utterly cast off the world of mankind. Though they are fallen and corrupted, and there is a curse brought upon the world, yet God entertained a design of appropriating a certain number to himself. Indeed all men and all creatures are his, as well since as before the fall. Whether they are elected or not, they are his. God does not lose his right to them by the fall, neither does he lose his power to dispose of them: they are still in his hands. Neither does he lose his end in creating them. God has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. It possibly was Satan's design, in endeavoring the fall of man, to cause that God should lose the creature that he had made, by getting him away from God into his own possession, and to frustrate God of his end in creating man. But this Satan has not obtained.

But yet in a sense the wicked may be said not to belong to God. God doth not own them He has rejected them and cast them away. They are not God's portion, they are Satan's portion. God has left them, and they are lost. When man fell, God left and cast off the bulk of mankind. But he was pleased, notwithstanding the universal fall, to choose out a number of them to be his, whom he would still appropriate to himself. Though the world is a fallen world, yet it was the will of God still to have a portion in it, and therefore he chose out some and set them apart for himself, Psa.

4:3, “But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him.” God’s portion is his people, and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, Deu. 32:9. Those who are God’s enemies, and to whom he is an enemy, are still his. But those who are his friends, his children, his jewels, that compose his treasure, are his in a very different manner. God has chosen the godly out of the rest of the world to be nearly related to him, to stand in the relation of children, to have a property in him, that they might not only be his people, but that he might be their God. He has chosen these to bestow himself upon them. He has chosen them from among others to be gracious to them, to show them his favor. He has chosen them to enjoy him, to see his glory, and to dwell with him forever. He has chosen them as his treasure, as a man chooses out gems from a heap of stones, with this difference: the man finds gems very different from other stones, and therefore chooses, but God chooses them, and therefore they become gems, and very different from others, Mal. 3:17, “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Psa. 135:4, “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.” God has chosen them for a most noble and excellent use, and therefore they are called vessels unto honor, and elect vessels. God has different uses for different men. Some are destined to a baser use, and are vessels unto dishonor. Others are chosen for the most noble use, for serving and glorifying God, and that God may show the glory of divine grace upon them.

Several things may here be observed concerning this election of God, whereby he chooses truly godly persons.

1. This election supposes that the persons chosen are found among others. The word election denotes this: it signifies *a choosing out*. The elect are favored by electing grace among the rest of mankind, with whom they are found mixed together as the tares and the wheat. They are found among them in the same sinfulness, and in the same misery, and are alike partakers of original corruption. They are among them in being destitute of anything in them that is good, in enmity against God, in being in bondage to Satan, in condemnation to eternal destruction, and in being

without righteousness. So that there is no distinction between them prior to that which the election makes. There is no respect wherein the elect are not among the common multitude of mankind, 1 Cor. 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And therefore,

2. No foreseen excellency in the elected is the motive that influences God to choose them. Election is only from his good pleasure. God's election being the first thing that causes any distinction, there can be no distinction already existing, the foresight of which influences God to choose them. It is not the seeing of any amiability in them above others, that causes God to choose them rather than the rest. God does not choose men, because they are excellent, but he makes them excellent, and because he has chosen them. It is not because God considers them as holy that he chooses them, but he chooses them that they might be holy, Eph. 1:4, 5, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." God does not choose them from the foresight of any respect they will have towards him more than others. God does not choose men and set his care upon them because they love him, for he has first loved us, 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" verse 19 (1 John. 4:19), "We love him, because he first loved us."

It is not from any foresight of good works that men do before or after conversion. But on the contrary, men do good works because God has chosen them, John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Nor did God choose men, because he foresaw that they would believe and come to Christ. Faith is the consequence of election, and not the cause of it, Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles

heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believe." It is because God has chosen men, that he calls them to Christ, and causes them to come to him. To suppose that election is from the foresight of faith, is to place calling before election, which is contrary to the order in which the Scripture represents things, Rom. 8:30, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is not from the foresight of any, either moral or natural qualifications, that God chooses men, nor because he sees that some men are of a more amiable make, and better natural temper or genius, nor because he foresees that some men will have better abilities, and will have more wisdom than others and so will be able to do more service for God than others, nor because he foresees that they will be great and rich and so possessed of greater advantages to serve him, 1 Cor. 1:27, 28, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Nor is it from any foresight of men's endeavors after conversion, because he sees that some whom he chooses will do much more than others to obtain heaven. But God chooses them, and therefore awakens them, and prompts them to strive for conversion. Rom. 9:16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Election in Scripture is everywhere referred to God's own good pleasure, Mat. 11:26, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." 2 Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

3. True Christians are chosen of God from all eternity, not only before they were born, but before the world was created. They were foreknown of God, and chosen by him out of the world, Eph. 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." 2 Tim. 1:9, "According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

4. God in election set his love upon those whom he elected, Rom. 9:13, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Jer. 31:3, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” 1 John 4:19, “We love him because he first loved us.” A God of infinite goodness and benevolence loves those that have no excellency to move or attract it. The love of men is consequent upon some loveliness in the object, but the love of God is antecedent to, and the cause of it. Believers were from all eternity beloved both by the Father and the Son. The eternal love of the Father appears in that he from all eternity contrived a way for their salvation, and chose Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer, and laid help upon him. It is a fruit of this electing love that God sent his Son into the world to die, it was to redeem those whom he so loved. 1 John 4:10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It is a fruit of the eternal, electing love of Jesus Christ, that he was willing to come into the world, and die for sinners, and that he actually came and died, Gal. 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And so conversion, and glorification, and all that is done for a believer from the first to the last, is a fruit of electing love.

5. This electing love of God is singly of every particular person. Some deny a particular election, and say that there is no other election than a general determination, that all that believe and obey shall be saved. Some also own no more than an absolute election of nations. But God did from all eternity singly and distinctly choose, and set his love upon, every particular person that ever believes, as is evident by Gal. 2:20, “Who loved me and gave himself for me.” God set his love from eternity upon this and that person, as particularly as if there were no other chosen than he. Therefore it is represented as though they were mentioned by name, that their names are written in the book of life, Luke 10:20, “Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” Rev. 13:8, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of

the world."

6. In election, believers were from all eternity given to Jesus Christ. As believers were chosen from all eternity, so Christ was from eternity chosen and appointed to be their Redeemer, and he undertook the work of redeeming them. There was a covenant respecting it between the Father and Son. Christ, as we have already observed, loved them before the creation of the world. Then he had their names, as it were, written in a book, and therefore the book of life is called the Lamb's book, Rev. 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." And he bears their names upon his heart, as the high priest of old did the names of the tribes of the children of Israel on his breastplate. Christ often calls the elect those whom God had given him. John 17:2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." In the 9th verse, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." In the 11th verse, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

This part of the subject may suggest to us the following reflections.

(1.) God's thus electing a certain definite number from among fallen men from all eternity, is a manifestation of his glory. It shows the glory of the divine sovereignty. God hereby declares himself the absolute disposer of the creature. He shows us how far his sovereignty and dominion extend, in eternally choosing some and passing by others, and leaving them to perish. God here appears in a majesty that is unparalleled. Those who can see no glory of dominion in this act, have not attained to right apprehensions of God, and never have been made sensible of his glorious greatness. And here is especially shown the glory of divine grace: in God's having chosen his people to blessedness and glory long before they are born, in his choosing them out of the mass of mankind from whom they were not distinguished, and in his love to them being prior to all that they have or do, being uninfluenced by any excellency of theirs, by the light of any labors or endeavors of theirs, or any respect of theirs towards him.

The doctrine of election shows that if those who are converted have earnestly sought grace and holiness, and in that way have obtained it, their obtaining it is not owing to their endeavors, but that it was the grace and mercy of God that caused them earnestly to seek conversion, that they might obtain it. It shows also that faith itself is the gift of God, and that the saints persevering in a way of holiness unto glory, is also the fruit of electing love. Believers' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them, and the giving of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, and the appointing of ordinances, are all fruits of the grace of election. All the grace that is shown to any of mankind, either in this world, or in the world to come, is comprised in the electing love of God.

(2.) If believers are the chosen of God, here is a great argument for their love and gratitude towards him. The consideration of the miserable condition in which God found you, and in which he left others, should move your hearts. How wonderful that God should take such thought of a poor worm from all eternity! God might have left you as well as many others, but it pleased the Lord to set his love upon you. What cause have you for love and thankfulness, that God should make choice of you, and set you apart for himself, rather than so many thousands of others!

God has chosen you not merely to be his subjects and servants, but to be his children, to be his particular treasure. He has chosen you to be blessed forever in the enjoyment of himself, and to dwell with him in his glory. He has given you from all eternity to his Son, to be united unto him, to become the spouse of Christ. He has chosen you that you might be holy and without blame, that you might have your filth taken away, and that you might have the image of God put upon you, and that your soul might be adorned, to be the bride of his glorious and dear Son. What cause for love is here!

(3.) If believers are a chosen generation, let all labor earnestly to make their election sure. If true Christians are chosen of God, this should induce all earnestly to inquire whether they are true Christians. 2 Pet. 1:5-7, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly

kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

Second, true Christians are a distinct race of men. They are of a peculiar descent or pedigree, different from the rest of the world. This is implied in their being called a generation. There are three significations of the word generation in the Scriptures. Sometimes it means, as is its meaning in the common use, *a class of persons among a people, or in the world, that are born together, or so nearly together, that the time of their being in the different stages of the age of man is the same*. They shall be young persons, middle aged, and old together. Or they shall be together upon the stage of action. All that are together upon the face of the earth, or the stage of action, are very often accounted as one generation. Thus when God threatened that not one of the Israelites of that generation should see the good land, it is meant, all from twenty years old and upwards.

A second meaning is, *those who are born of a common progenitor*.

A third meaning of the word in Scripture, is, *a certain race of mankind, whose generation and birth agree, not as to time, but as to descent and pedigree, or as to those persons from whom they originally proceeded.* So it is to be understood, Mat. 1:1, "This is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham;" that is, this is the book that gives an account of his pedigree. And this meaning, *viz.* those who are of the same race and descent, must be given to the word in the text. The righteous are often spoken of in Scripture as being a distinct generation, Psa. 14:5, "There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous." Psa. 24:6, "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." Psa. 73:15, "If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children."

That the godly are a distinct race appears evident, since they are descended from God. They are a heavenly race, and they are derived from above. The heathen were wont to feign that their heroes and great men were descended from the gods, but God's people are descended from the true and living God, without any fiction, Psa. 22:30, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." That is, a seed, a posterity, shall serve him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for his

posterity or offspring.

Now the people of God may be considered as descending from God, and as being his posterity, either remotely or immediately.

1. They are *remotely* descended from God. The church is a distinct race that originally came from God. Other men are of the earth, they are of earthly derivation, they are the posterity of men, but the church is the posterity of God. Thus it is said, Gen. 6:2, "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." The sons of God were the children of the church, of the posterity of Seth. The daughters of men were those that were born out of the church, and of the posterity of Cain, and those that adhered to him.

It was God that set up the church in the world, and those who were the first founders of the church were of God, and were called specially *the sons of God*. Seth was the seed that God appointed, Gen. 4:25, "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth. For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Adam, in Luke's genealogy of Christ (Luke 3:38, "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God,") is called the son of God, possibly, not only because he was immediately created by God, but also because he was from God, and was begotten by him. As he was a good man, and was the founder of the church of which Christ himself became a son. He was the first in line of the church, and as such he was from God. When the church was almost extinct God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and afterwards out of Haran. Abraham was one immediately from God, and all God's people in all succeeding ages are accounted as the children of Abraham. God promised Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the seashore, meaning primarily not his posterity according to the flesh. John the Baptist said, God is able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Those are the seed of Abraham, as we are taught in the New Testament, that are of the faith of Abraham. Christians, as well as Jews, are the seed of Abraham, Gal. 3:29, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So the church is the seed of Jacob, who is called God's son, Hos. 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called *my son*

out of Egypt." All God's people are called Israel, not only his posterity according to the flesh, but proselytes of old, and Gentile Christians now under the gospel. The sincerely godly, and they only, are the true Israel.

So the people of God are descended from God the Father originally, as they are descended from Christ the Son of God. Christians are called *the seed of Christ*, Gal. 3:29, "And if ye be Christ's," etc. They are, as it were, his *posterity*. Christ calls them his *children*, Heb. 2:13, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me." So that if we trace the pedigree of God's people up to their original, they will be found to be descended from God: they are of heaven, they are not of this world. Other men are of the earth, and are earthly, but these are heavenly, and are of heaven. The wicked are called the men of this world, Psa. 17:14, "From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." The first beginnings of the church were from God, the great founder of the church. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and those men, who under him have been founders, were of God, were of him. God chose them, called them, and created them for this purpose. Since which, God's people are descended one from another; the church is continued and propagated, as it were, by generation. If there were no ordinary and stated means made use of for the continuing and propagating the church, it would not be so. But God's people are made the instruments of one another's conversion, by begetting one another's souls. The church is continued by itself instrumentally through all generations, the people of God are begotten through the education, instruction, and endeavors of those who were God's people before. Therefore the church is represented in Scripture as being the mother of its members, Gal. 4:26, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Believers are the children of the church, as they are often called, Isa. 49:20, "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shalt say again in thine ears, the place is too strait for me; give place to me, that I may dwell." Isa. 54:1, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." And many other places.

God's people are often, through their education and instruction, the spiritual parents of those of whom they are the natural parents. The ministers of the Word and ordinances are spiritual fathers. The apostle tells the Christian Corinthians, that he had begotten them through the gospel.

2. God's people are immediately begotten of God. When they become saints, they are *born again*, and they have a new nature given them. They have a new life begun, and they are renewed in the whole man by a new generation and birth wherein they are born of God, John 1:12, 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*." They are born of the Spirit of God, John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is *born of the Spirit*." God is said to have formed the church from the womb, Isa. 44:2, "Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen."

This truth also may suggest to us a few profitable reflections.

(1.) Christians ought to bear with one another. It appears from what has been said that they are all of one kindred, that they have a relation to other Christians which they have not to the rest of the world, being of a distinct race from them, but of the same race one with another. They are descended all along from the same progenitors; they are the children of the same universal church of God; they are all the children of Abraham; they are the seed of Jesus Christ; they are the offspring of God. And they are yet much more alike, than their being of the same race originally argues them to be: they are also immediately the children of the same Father. God hath begotten all by the same Word and Spirit. They are all of one family, and should therefore love as brethren, 1 Pet. 3:8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

It is very unbecoming those who are God's offspring, to entertain a spirit of hatred and ill will one towards another. It is very unbecoming to be

backward in helping and assisting one another, and supplying each other's wants, much more, to contrive and seek one another's hurt, to be revengeful one towards another.

(2.) Let Christians take heed so to walk that they may not dishonor their pedigree. You are of a very honorable race, more honorable by far than if you were the offspring of kings, and had royal blood in your veins. You are a heavenly offspring, the seed of Jesus Christ, the children of God. They that are of noble race are wont to value themselves highly upon the honor of their families, to dwell on their titles, their coats of arms, and their ensigns of honor, and to recount the exploits of their illustrious forefathers. How much more careful should you be of the honor of your descent: that you in nothing behave yourself unworthy of the great God, the eternal and omnipotent King of heaven and earth, whose offspring you are!

There are many things that are very base, and too mean for such as you. Such are a giving way to earthly-mindedness, a groveling like moles in the earth, a suffering your soul to cleave to those earthly things which ought to be neglected and despised by those who are of heavenly descent, an indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, suffering the soul to be immersed in filth, being taken up with mean and unworthy delights common to the beasts, being intemperate in the gratification of any carnal appetite whatsoever, or a being much concerned about earthly honor. It is surely a disgrace to them, who are accounted to God for a generation, much to care whether they are accounted great upon this dunghill. So it is unworthy of your noble descent to be governed by your passions: you should be guided by higher principles of reason and virtue, and an universal respect to the glory and honor of God.

But Christians should seek after those things which will be to the honor of their birth, after spiritual wisdom, and knowledge of the most worthy and noble truths. They should seek more and more an acquaintance with God, and to be assimilated to him, their great progenitor, and their immediate Father, that they may have the image of his excellent and divine perfections. They should endeavor to act like God, wherein they are capable of imitation of him. They should seek heavenly-mindedness: those noble appetites after heavenly and spiritual enjoyments, a noble

ambition after heavenly glory, a contempt of the trifles and mean things of this world. They should seek after those delights and satisfactions that can be enjoyed by none but heavenly minds. They should exercise a spirit of true, universal, and disinterested love and confidence, and Christian charity. They should be much in devotion, and divine contemplation.

(3.) We see here a reason why Christians are of so different a nature and temper from the rest of the world. The truly godly are very different in their disposition from others. They hate those things that the rest of the world love, and love those things for which the rest of the world have no relish, insomuch that others are ready to wonder that they should place any happiness in a strict observance of the self-denying duties of religion. They wonder what delight they can take in spending so much time in meditation and prayer, and that they do not place happiness in those things which themselves do, 1 Pet. 4:4, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot; speaking evil of you." But the reason is, they are of a different race, and so derive different dispositions.

It is ordinary to see those who are of different families, of a different temper. The natural temper of parents is commonly in some degree transmitted to their posterity. Indeed, all agree in many things, for all are of the same blood originally. All are descended from the same Adam, and the same Noah. But Christians are born again of another stock, different from all the rest of the world. Therefore they are of a temper by themselves, wherein none of the rest of the world agree with them, Rev. 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father: to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever."

II. True Christians are a royal priesthood.

The two offices of king and priest were accounted very honorable both among Jews and heathens. But it was a thing not known under the law of Moses, that the same person should sustain both these offices in a stated manner. While Moses himself is said to have been king in Jeshurun, yet his brother Aaron was the high priest. Those who were kings by divine

appointment in Israel were of another tribe from the priesthood, *viz*. the tribe of Judah. Before the giving the law we have an instance of one who was both king and priest, *viz*. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18, "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God."

Therefore, in some of the prophecies of Christ, it is spoken of as a remarkable thing of him, that he should be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, Psa. 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." The same again is prophesied of as a wonderful thing by Zechariah, that he should be a priest upon a throne, Zec. 6:13, "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In this respect the gospel dispensation differs from the legal, that it reveals the compatibility of the two offices. One person, Jesus Christ, is antitype of both kings and priests, under the law. As it is the will of Christ, who became in all things like unto us, that his disciples should in many things become like unto him, so it is in this among others. As Christ is the Son of God, so those that are Christ's are the children of God. As Christ is the heir of God, so as Christ liveth, it is his will that they should live also. As Christ rose from the dead, so it is the will of Christ that his saints should rise also. As Christ is in heaven in glory, so it is the will of Christ that they should be with him where he is. So as Christ is both King and Priest, so shall believers be made kings and priests. What is said in the text is either with respect to what they now are, or what they shall be hereafter. The apostle says, "ye are a royal priesthood;" that is, ye have those honors in reversion. Christians are kings here, as a king who is in his minority, who though the crown is his right, has not yet come actually to reign. They are indeed in an exalted state while here, but not as they will be hereafter. Christians while here are indeed priests, but not as they will be. Christians are called kings and priests here, in this world, Rev. 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." But in Rev. 5 the saints in heaven speak of this as the consequence of their glory and exaltation, Rev. 5:9, 10, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of

every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; that we should reign on the earth."

First, Christians are kings.

When Christians are called kings, the Scriptures include both what they actually have in this world, and what they have in a future state. The reward which our Lord Jesus promised to his disciples was a kingdom, Luke 22:29, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Christians, having this promise, are therefore heirs of a kingdom here, which they are hereafter to receive, Jam. 2:5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

The reward of the saints is represented as a kingdom, because the possession of a kingdom is the height of human advancement in this world, and as it is the common opinion that those who have a kingdom have the greatest possible happiness. The happiness of a kingdom, or royal state, for which it is so much admired by mankind, consists in these things:

1. The honor of a kingdom.

2. The possessions of kings.

3. The government or authority of kings.

Now with respect to each of these, the happiness of the saints is far greater than that of the kings and greatest potentates in the world.

1. True Christians will be advanced to honors far above those of earthly kings. They will have a vastly higher dignity than any princes. If these are nobly descended, it is not so great an honor as to be the sons of God. If they are nobly educated, and have their minds formed for government, and have princely qualifications, these qualifications are not so honorable as those with which God endows his saints, whose minds he fills with divine knowledge, and gives them true and perfect holiness. Princes

appear honorable from their outward enjoyment of honor and dignity, their royal robes, their stately palaces, and their splendid equipage. But these are not so honorable as those white robes, those inherent ornaments, with which the saints shall appear in heaven, with which they "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." What is a king's palace to those mansions in heaven, that Christ prepares for his saints? The honor of the creature consists in likeness and nearness to the Creator in heaven. The saints shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. They shall be most near to him, and shall be admitted to a most intimate fellowship.

2. The saints shall have greater and more extensive possessions than any earthly monarch. One reason for which the state of kings is admired is their wealth. They have the most precious things laid up in their treasures. We read of the peculiar treasure of kings, Ecc. 2:8, "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts;" that is, the peculiar treasure of other kings. David conquered and subdued many kings, and spoiled their peculiar treasure, which fell to his son Solomon.

But the precious treasures of kings are not to be compared to those precious things which Christ will give his saints in another world: the gold tried in the fire that Christ has purchased with his own blood, those precious jewels, those graces and joys of his Spirit, and that beauty of mind with which he will endow them. King's possessions are very extensive, especially were they thus when kings were generally absolute, and their whole dominions, their subjects and their fortunes, were looked upon as their possessions. But these fall short of the extensive possessions of the saints, who possess all things. They are the heirs of God, and all that is God's is theirs so far as it can contribute to their happiness, Rev. 21:7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." 1 Cor. 3:21, 22, "Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

3. The saints shall also be advanced to the authority of kings. Christ has

appointed to them a kingdom, and in that kingdom they shall reign. It is promised concerning the saints, that they shall reign, Rev. 5:10, "And hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Rev. 22:5, "And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." It is evident that they shall have a kingdom with respect to rule and government, as appears, Rev. 2:26, 27, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over all nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." But we must see that we rightly understand this. They shall not be appointed by God as sovereigns of the world, without any superior to direct them. Neither shall they be properly deputies or viceroys, as king Agrippa and some other kings were the deputies of the Roman emperors. But they shall reign in fellowship with Christ as joint heirs. They shall reign in the same kingdom with him, and shall have the happiness of having things done according to their will as much as if their own wills were paramount. Christ wills their will. All things will be disposed in the best manner for them, and to promote their happiness. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The reigning of the saints will consist partly in *judging*. For the saints shall judge the world, angels and men with Christ, Mat. 19:28, "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life!" How earnestly do men seek a kingdom! What fatigues, what dangers, what bloodshed, will they not encounter! In seeking conversion, you seek a kingdom. You who are poor, you who are children, have opportunity to obtain a kingdom, to advance yourselves to higher dignity, to more substantial honors, to greater possessions, to more precious treasures, to be clothed in robes of richer splendor, and to fill a loftier throne, than those enjoyed by the greatest earthly monarchs.

It is a crown that you are to run for, an incorruptible crown, to be given you by the Great King of heaven, and to be worn by you as long as his throne shall endure. What encouragement is here afforded to the saints under afflictions and reproaches. What are they, to the worth and honor of a heavenly kingdom? When you shall have a crown of glory placed on your head, and be seated on Christ's throne, and shine forth as the light, and are seated at his royal banquet, then you will suffer no more forever. All trouble, all reproach, shall be driven away; you will be too high to be reached by the malice of men and devils, and shall soon forget all your sorrows.

Second, true Christians are priests of God. The priesthood under the law was a very honorable and sacred office, Heb. 5:4, "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." It was on account of this honor that those proud men, Korah and his company, envied Aaron; and God asserted and vindicated Aaron's right to it, by causing his rod to bud.

It was an honor which, before the giving of the law, when every particular family was wont to offer sacrifices for themselves, the firstborn used to claim, and therefore the birthright was so much esteemed and valued. Therefore Jacob had such a desire of having the birthright of his brother Esau, and Esau's despising of it is spoken of as a great instance of his profaneness. A priest is said to be a chief man among his people, Lev. 21:4, "But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself." Because the office of the priesthood was so honorable, it is noticed as a wicked contempt of it in several wicked kings, that they made of the meanest of the people priests. The office was so honorable, that a king, Uzziah, coveted the honor of it, and it is mentioned as an instance of his pride that he did so, 2 Chr. 26:16, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." And it was a very sacred office, and that above all other offices. Therefore those things were forbidden the priest that were lawful for all others, such as to be defiled for the dead, or to take to wife one that is put away from her husband,

and the reason is given, Lev. 21:6, “They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God, for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer; therefore they shall be holy. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane, neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband; for he is holy unto his God. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore, for he offereth the bread of thy God, he shall be holy unto thee: for I, the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy.”

Jesus Christ is the only proper priest that is to offer sacrifices, and make atonement for sin, under the New Testament. He was the priest of whom all the priests of old were typical. But yet all believers are herein in a measure conformed to their head, and assimilated to him. The priesthood now is no longer confined to one family, to Aaron and his sons, but all the true Israel are priests. Every true Christian has a work and office that is as sacred as that of the priests was under the law, and everyone is advanced to a like honor, and indeed to a greater. But how every true Christian is a priest of God will appear in the following things.

1. Every true Christian is allowed as near an access to God, and as free a use of the sacred things, as the priests were of old. God under the law dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, that were the symbol of his presence, and those places were holy. The seed of Aaron might go into the holy place to minister before the Lord, but if any other came nigh, he was to be put to death, Num. 3:10, “And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office: and the stranger that cometh nigh, shall be put to death.”

But now all are allowed to come nigh, we are all allowed a free access to God, to come with boldness and confidence. God’s people are not kept at such a distance now as they were under the law. The church then was in its minority, and the heir, while a child, differs nothing from a servant. The servant is not allowed the free access of a child, he is kept more at a distance with fear and dread. Agreeably to the nature of that dispensation, there were not those special discoveries of the grace and love of God that are now made, and which invite rather than forbid near access.

When God was wont to appear to the children of Israel, it was more with terror and manifestations of awful majesty, and not so much with the discoveries of grace as now. When God appeared on mount Sinai, it was in flaming fire, and with thunder, and lightning, and earthquakes. But in how different a manner did he appear, when he appeared in the person of Christ, with mildness, and gentleness, and love! There is much the same difference between us and them with respect of the liberty of access to God, as there was between the liberty of access of the children of Israel at mount Sinai, and the liberty which Christ's disciples had of approach to him when he was upon earth. At mount Sinai, only Moses and Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu, were allowed to come up into the mount, and none but Moses was to approach nigh, Exo. 24:1, "And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off." But if any other presumed to touch the mount, God would break forth upon him. But Christ's disciples used daily to converse with him, as an intimate friend, Heb. 12:18, "For ye are *not* come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Yea, Christians are now allowed as near an approach unto God, as the high priest himself, who was allowed a much nearer approach than any of the other priests. God's dwelling place was the temple, but more especially was it in the holy of holies, in the mercy seat between the cherubim. There was a veil which separated that part of the temple from the rest, and no one might ever enter that veil but the high priest, and that but once a year, not oftener, upon pain of death, Lev. 16:2, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place, within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." The way into the holiest of all was not as yet made manifest, but now it is, Heb. 9:7, 8, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing."

But now we are all allowed as near an access to God as the high priest only was under the law, and with more freedom, for he might approach

but once a year. But Christians may approach boldly at all times through the blood of Christ, without any danger of dying, Heb. 4:16, “Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” The throne of grace and the mercy seat are the same thing. “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” That access into the holiest of all was allowed to all under the gospel, and at any time. It is signified by the rending of the veil, upon the death of Christ, for then was that blood shed by which we have access, Mat. 27:50, 51, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”

But especially will the access of saints in another world be much more near and familiar than that of the high priest. They shall not only enter into the holy of holies, but shall dwell with God in it, for heaven is the holiest of all. They shall then dwell in God’s presence, they shall see his face, which no man can see and live.

In this world, though there is greater liberty of access than there was of old, yet still Christians are kept at a great distance from God in comparison of what they will be in heaven, where they shall be admitted even to higher privileges than Moses in the mount, when he besought God to show him his glory. They shall then see with open face, and shall know as they are known.

2. Christians are a priesthood with respect to their offerings to God. The principal part of the work of the priests of old was to offer sacrifice, and to burn incense. As the priests of old offered sacrifice, so the work of Christians is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, 1 Pet. 2:5, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” And here,

(1.) Christians offer up their own hearts to God in sacrifice: they dedicate

themselves to God, Rom. 6:13, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The Christian gives himself to God freely as of mere choice. He does it heartily; he desires to be God’s, and to belong to no other. He gives all the faculties of his soul to God. He gives God his heart, and it is offered to God as a sacrifice in two ways.

Of these, the first is when the heart is broken for sin. A sacrifice, before it can be offered, must be wounded and slain. The heart of a true Christian is first wounded by a sense of sin, of the great evil and danger of it, and is slain with godly sorrow and true repentance. When the heart truly repents, it dies unto sin. Repentance is compared unto a death in the Word of God. Rom. 6:6-8, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Gal. 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” As Christ, when he was offered, was offered broken upon the cross. So there is some likeness to this, when a soul is converted: the heart is offered to God slain and broken, Psa. 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

The second way is when a Christian offers his heart to God, flaming with love. The sacrifice of old was not only to be slain, but to be burnt upon the altar. It was to ascend in flame and smoke, and so to be a sweet savor to God.

That fire upon the altar was a type of two things: it was a type of the fire of the wrath of God, and it was also a type of the fire of the Spirit of God, or of divine love. The Holy Ghost is often compared to fire. With respect to the former, Christ alone is the sacrifice offered in the flame of God’s wrath. But with regard to the latter, the hearts of the children of men are offered in the flame of divine love, and ascend up to God in that flame.

This divine love is fire from heaven, as the fire upon the altar of old was. When a soul is drawn to God in true conversion, fire comes down from God out of heaven, in which the heart is offered in sacrifice, and the soul is baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In many of the sacrifices that were offered, only the fat about the inwards was burnt upon the altar, which fat of the inwards thus rising in flame, represented the offering of the soul. It is that which God looks at. It is that which must be offered in sacrifice to God. Especially hereafter, when the saints will be made priests in a more glorious manner than at present, will they offer up their hearts wholly to God in the flame of love. They shall, as it were, all be transformed into love, as burning oil is transformed into flame, and so, in that flame, shall they ascend up to God. Their souls will be as the angels, who are as a flame of fire not only for activity in God's service, but for love too. They shall be a flame ever burning, which shall burn longer than the fire upon the altar in Israel, that never went out, from the time that fire came down out of heaven in the wilderness, till the carrying away into Babylon.

(2.) This spiritual priesthood offers to God the sacrifice of praise. Many of their sacrifices under the law were sacrifices of peace offerings, which were mostly for thanksgiving and praise. But the spiritual sacrifice of the hearty and sincere praises of a saint, are more acceptable to God than all the bulls, and rams, and he-goats that they offered. The heartfelt praises of one true Christian are of more account with God than all those two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep, which Solomon offered to God at the dedication of the temple, as a sacrifice of peace offerings. Praise is called a sacrifice, Heb. 13:15, "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." Psa. 50:13, 14, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High;" verse 23 "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God;" Psa. 69:30, 31, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." Praises are therefore in Hosea called *calves of our lips*, because they are like *calves*

offered in sacrifice, Hos. 14:2, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips." Only true Christians offer those sacrifices. However hypocrites pretend to praise God, and to offer thanksgiving to him. Yet they, being insincere, offer not sacrifices with which God is well pleased. They offer not spiritual sacrifices, and therefore they are not of the spiritual priesthood. In heaven especially are the saints a holy priesthood upon this account, whose work it is forever to offer these sacrifices to God, who cease not day nor night to praise God and sing forth their ardent joyful hallelujahs. They sing a new song, a song that never will end, and never will grow old.

(3.) The next sacrifice which is offered by this spiritual priesthood, is obedience, sincere obedience. The sacrifices under the law did not only represent Christ's *satisfying for sin* by suffering, but they also represented Christ's *obeying* in suffering. For the sacrifices under the law were not only for propitiation, but they were for purchasing benefits, and so typified not only the satisfaction, but merit, which was by obedience, Psa. 40:6-8, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight *to do thy will*, O my God; yea, *thy law* is within my heart." And though the obedience of saints has no merit, yet it is pleasing and acceptable to God. It is as a sweet-smelling savor, and is compared to sacrifices, and preferred before them, 1 Sam 15:22, "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Christians, by offering obedience to God in their lives and conversation, do what the apostle calls offering their bodies to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, as their reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). They offer their bodies, that is they dedicate their bodies to holy uses and purposes. They yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. The soul, while here, acts externally by the body. And in this Christians serve God. They yield their eyes, their ears, their tongues, their hands, and feet, as servants to God, to be obedient to the dictates of his Word, and of his Holy Spirit in the soul.

(4.) Another sacrifice which we shall mention as offered by this spiritual priesthood is charity, or expressions of Christian love in gifts to others. If the gift flows from a spirit of Christian love although it be but a cup of cold water, it is an acceptable sacrifice to God. And indeed whatsoever is given for a pious use, if it be to promote religion, and uphold the public worship of God, or to benefit a particular person, if it be done from a good spirit, it is a Christian sacrifice, Heb. 13:16, "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

But sacrifices of this kind may principally be ranked under two heads, of which the first is:

Liberality to ministers of the gospel. The priests of old lived upon the sacrifices that were offered to God, and what is now offered to ministers for their comfortable and honorable support Christ looks upon as offered to himself. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." Mat. 10:40. Thus Paul says of those things that were sent him by his hearers, that it was a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God, Phil. 4:14, etc. "Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphiroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

The second is bounty to the poor. Christ accepts what is done to them as being done to himself, Mat. 25:40, "And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verity I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." This God prefers before the legal sacrifices. Hos. 6:6, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."

(5.) Another offering of this priesthood to God is the prayer of faith. Though this is rather compared to *incense* in Scripture than to a *sacrifice*, yet it is equally an evidence of their priesthood. Incense was that sweet

confection which we read of, Exo. 30:34, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices, with pure frankincense; of each shall there be a like weight.” These they were wont to burn upon the censer as they offered it, which made a most fragrant smell. That incense is a type of the merits of Jesus Christ, and seems also to be a type of the prayers of God’s people in faith of the former. It was the custom, when the priest in the temple was burning incense, for the people to be praying without, Luke 1:10, “And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” And gracious prayer is compared to incense, Psa. 141:2, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” The prayer of faith is as a fragrant savor to God, through the merits of him towards whom that faith is exercised.

REFLECTIONS

1. Here are great motives for all earnestly to seek that they may become true Christians. It is a great honor to be priests of God. It was a great honor of old to be a priest under the law. It was a greater in some respects than to be a king, because they were nearer to God, and they in their work were more immediately concerned with him: it was a more holy and divine office. But more honorable is it to be of the spiritual priesthood. The access to God is nearer, and an infinitely greater privilege. Especially is the access to God which they will have in another world, where they shall see God, and shall converse with Christ as a man with his friend. If ever a king was ambitious of the honor of the legal priesthood, surely you may well desire the spiritual, which is an eternal priesthood.

Consider that you are capable of receiving this priesthood. Of old, those who were not of the posterity of Aaron, were incapable of the priesthood. It was in vain for them to seek it, but it is not in vain for you to seek this spiritual priesthood. Consider also that you have a call to it, you have warrant sufficient. It would be a dreadful presumption for you to seek this honor if you had not a call to it, Heb. 5:4, “No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” But you are called, and now it would be presumption and profane contempt in you to refuse it: to refuse such an honor as God offers you. Take heed, therefore, that there be not among you any profane person as Esau, who for a

morsel of meat sold his birthright, and sold the priesthood that belonged to it. Take heed that you do not sell this spiritual priesthood for a morsel of meat, or for the trifles of this world, that you are not more concerned about a little worldly pelf or vain glory, than about that which is so sacred and honorable.

For direction, that you may be one of this spiritual priesthood, seek of God his holy anointing, that is that God would pour out his Spirit in his sanctifying influences upon you. The priests of old were consecrated by the holy anointing oil, Exo. 29:7, "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him." Exo. 30:30, "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." If you are here separated for this holy station and service, you must have that holy anointing of the Spirit of God, typified by the oil that was poured upon Aaron's head. The holy anointing oil of God must be upon you.

2. Let all who profess themselves Christians take heed that they do not defile themselves and profane their sacred character. There was great strictness required of old of the priests, lest they should defile themselves and profane their office, and it was regarded as a dreadful thing to profane it. So holy a God hath threatened in the New Testament, that "if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." 1 Cor. 3:17. As Christians are here called the *temple of God,* so it is said, in the fifth verse , "Ye are a *spiritual house*, an holy priesthood." Avoid the commission of all immoralities, or things that have a horrid filthiness in them, things that will dreadfully profane the sacred name by which you are called, and the sacred station wherein you are set.

Take heed especially of lascivious impurities. Such things were looked upon as defiling the holy office of the priesthood of old, insomuch that if but a daughter of a priest was guilty of whoredom, she was to be burnt. Remember Hophni and Phineas, how sorely God dealt with them for profaning their office by their impurities, and with good Eli, that he was no more thorough to restrain them. God brought a curse upon the whole family which never was removed. God took away the priesthood from him, and took away the ark of the covenant from him and from Israel, and delivered it into captivity, and fulfilled his threatening, that there

should not be an old man of his house forever.

Take heed of every sin: an allowing any sin whatever is a dreadful presumption of your holy character.

3. See that you well execute your office. Offer up your heart in sacrifice. Get and keep a near access to God. Come with boldness. Offer up a heart broken for sin; offer it up flaming with love to God; offer praise to God. Praise God for his glorious excellency, and for his love and mercy. Consider what great things you have to praise God for: the redemption of Jesus Christ, his sufferings, his obedience, and the gift of that holiness, which makes you like unto God.

Be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and do good. Consider it is part of your office thus to do to which you are called and anointed, and as a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Pity others in distress and be ready to help one another. God will have mercy and not sacrifice.

And be much in offering up your prayers to God, and see that all your offerings are offered upon the right altar, otherwise they will be abominable to God. Offer your hearts to God through Jesus Christ. In his name present the sacrifice of praise, obedience, charity, and of prayer on the golden altar perfumed with the incense of Christ's merits. Your reward will be to have this honor in heaven, to be exalted to that glorious priesthood, to be made a priest unto God forever and ever.

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The Nature and End of Excommunication

The apostle reproves the church at Corinth for not excommunicating an offending person; and directs them speedily to cast him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out such scandalous persons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houses when they kept the passover. In the text and two foregoing verses, he more particularly explains their duty with respect to such vicious persons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with such. But then shows the difference they ought to observe in their carriage towards those who were vicious among the heathen, who had never joined with the church, and towards those of the same vicious character who had been their professed brethren; see verses 9-12. “I wrote unto you, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is *called a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat.”

In the words of the text we may observe:

1. The *duty enjoined*: including the behavior required, negatively expressed, *not to keep company*, and the manner or degree, *no not to eat*.

2. The *object*: a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. We are not to understand merely these particular vices, but also any other gross sins, or visible wickedness. It is evident, that the apostle here and in the context, intends that we should exclude out of our company all those who are visibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verses he expresses his meaning by this, that we should purge out the old leaven. And explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all visible wickedness; as in verse 8. “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and *wickedness*, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Another thing by which the object of this behavior or dealing is characterized, is that he be one *that is called a brother*, or one that hath been a professed Christian, and a member of the church.

DOCTRINE

Those members of the visible Christian church who are become visibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be excommunicated.

In handling this subject, I shall speak, (1.) Of the nature of excommunication; (2.) Of the subject; and (3.) Of the ends of it.

I. I shall say something of the *nature* of excommunication. It is a punishment executed in the name and according to the will of Christ, whereby a person who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the visible church of Christ is cast out of the church and delivered unto Satan. It is a punishment inflicted; it is expressly called a punishment by the apostle in 2 Cor. 2:6. Speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." For though it be not designed by man for the destruction of the person, but for his correction, and so is of the nature of a castigatory punishment, at least so far as it is inflicted by men; yet it is in itself a great and dreadful calamity, and the most severe punishment that Christ hath appointed in the visible church. Although in it the church is to seek only the good of the person and his recovery from sin — there appearing, upon proper trial, no reason to hope for his recovery by gentler means — yet it is at God's sovereign disposal, whether it shall issue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal destruction; as it always doth issue in the one or the other. — In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of consideration; *viz.* Wherein this punishment *consists*, and by *whom* it is inflicted.

First I would show wherein this punishment consists; and it is observable that there is in it something *privative*, and something *positive*.

1. There is something *privative* in excommunication, which consists in being deprived of a benefit heretofore enjoyed. This part of the

punishment, in the Jewish church, was called *putting out of the synagogue*, John 16:2. The word *synagogue* is of the same signification as the word *church*. So this punishment in the Christian church is called *casting out of the church*. The apostle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this punishment without cause, says in 3 John 10. "He casteth them out of the church." It is sometimes expressed by the church's *withdrawing* from a member, 2 Thes. 3:6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

The privative part of excommunication consists in being *cut off* from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's visible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into these two sorts: those that are God's visible people and those that are of the visible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be *within* the visible church of Christ. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be *without* this visible kingdom, to be cut off from its privileges, treated as belonging to the visible kingdom of Satan. For,

(1) They are cut off from being the objects of that *charity* of God's people which is due to Christian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for all men ought to be the objects of their love. But I speak of the brotherly charity due to visible saints. — Charity, as the apostle represents it, is the bond by which the several members of the church of Christ are united together: and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectness; Col. 3:14. "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." But when a person is justly excommunicated, it is like a physician's cutting off a diseased member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken. — A scandal is the same as a stumbling-block. And therefore while the scandal remains, it obstructs the charity of others. And if it finally remain after proper endeavors to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and so the offender is cut off from the charitable opinion and esteem of the church. It cannot any longer look upon him as a Christian, and so rejects him. Therefore excommunication is called a rejection, Tit. 3:10. "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, *reject*." This implies that the church disapproves the person as a Christian. It cannot any longer

charitably look upon him as a saint, or fellow-worshipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, esteem him an enemy of God. And so [it] doth openly withdraw its charity from him, ceasing to acknowledge him as a fellow-Christian, any more than the heathens. He is also cut off from that honor which is due to brethren and fellow-Christians. To be a visible Christian is an honorable character; but excommunicated persons forfeit this honor. Christians ought not to pay that honor and respect to them which they pay to others; but should treat them as unworthy of such honor, that they may be ashamed. Christ tells us, they should "be unto us as heathen men and publicans," (Mat. 18:17) which implies a withdrawing from them that common respect which we pay to others. We ought to treat them so as to let them plainly see that we do not count them worthy of it, to put them to shame.

Much love and complacency is due to those whom we are obliged in charity to receive as saints, because they are visible Christians. But this complacency excommunicated persons forfeit. We should still wish well to them, and seek their good. Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence. We should seek their good by it; and it is to be used as a means of their eternal salvation. But complacency and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn. And on the contrary, they are to be the objects of displacency, as visibly and apparently wicked. We are to cast them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God. — In this sense the psalmist professes a hatred of those who were the visible enemies of God. Psa. 139:21, 22. "Do I not hate them, O lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with a hatred of malice or ill-will, but with displacency and abhorrence of their wickedness. In this respect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who, though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacency. Thus excommunicated persons are cut off from the charity of the church.

(2) They are cut off also from the *society* which Christians have together as brethren. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from such; 2 Thes. 3:6. To *avoid* them; Rom. 16:17. To *have no company* with them; 2 Thes. 3:14. And to *treat them as heathens and publicans*; Mat. 18:17. The

people of God are, as much as may be, to withdraw from them as to that common society which is proper to subsist among Christians. — Not that they should avoid speaking to them on any occasion. All manner and all degrees of society are not forbidden; but all unnecessary society, or such as is wont to be among those who delight in the company of each other. We should not associate ourselves with them so as to make them our companions. Yea, there ought to be such an avoiding of their company as may show great dislike.

Particularly, we are forbidden such a degree of associating ourselves with them, as there is in making them *our guests* at our tables, or in being *their guests* at their tables; as is manifest in the text, where we are commanded to have no company with them, *no not to eat*. That this respects not eating with them at the Lord's supper, but a common eating, is evident by the words, that the eating here forbidden, is one of the *lowest degrees* of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with such a one, saith the apostle, *no not to eat* — as much as to say, no not in so low a degree as to eat with him. But eating with him at the Lord's supper, is the very highest degree of visible Christian communion. Who can suppose that the apostle meant this: Take heed and have no company with a man, no not so much as in the highest degree of communion that you can have? Besides, the apostle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which, however, they *might* hold with the heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators. Then he informs them, he means not with fornicators of this world, that is, the heathens; but, saith he, "if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator, etc. with such a one keep no company, *no not to eat*." This makes it most apparent, that the apostle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table; for so, they might not keep company with the heathens, any more than with an excommunicated person. Here naturally arise two questions.

QUEST. I. How far are the church to treat excommunicated persons as they would those who never have been of the visible church? I answer, they are to treat them as heathens, excepting in these two things, in which there is a difference to be observed.

1. They are to have a greater concern for their welfare still, than if they

never had been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwise, to reclaim and save them, than they are obliged to take towards those who have been always heathens. This seems manifest by that of the apostle, 2 Thes. 3:14, 15. “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connection; and so to pray for him, and to take pains by admonishing him. — The very reason of the thing shows the same. For this very ordinance of excommunication is used for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the person excommunicated. And surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we never had any special connection. Thus, there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the church. — But then,

2. On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater displacency and disrespect than the heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the apostle plainly doth not require of us to avoid the company of the heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but expressly requires us to avoid the company of any brother who shall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like them. — This is also plain by the reason of the thing. For those who have once been visible Christians and have apostatized and cast off that visibility, deserve to be treated with more abhorrence than those who have never made any pretensions to Christianity. The sin of such, in apostatizing from their profession, is more aggravated, than the sin of those who never made any profession. They far more dishonor religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Christ says, Mat. 18:17. “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,” it is not meant that we should treat an excommunicated brother as Christians ought to treat heathens and publicans; for they

might eat with them, as Christ himself did; and the apostle gives leave to eat with such, 1 Cor. 10:27, and in the context gives leave to keep company with such; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated person. — Christ's meaning must be, that we should treat an excommunicated person as the Jews were wont to treat the heathens and publicans; and as the disciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and used to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and sinners. They would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter [dare] not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were present; Gal. 2:12.

QUEST. II. What kindness and respect may and ought to be shown to such persons? — I answer, There are some things by which the members of the church are obliged to show kindness to them; and these things are chiefly, to pray for them, and to admonish them. — And the common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them; such as relieving them when they are sick, or under any other distress; allowing them those benefits of human society, and that help, which are needful for the support and defense of their lives and property. — The duties of natural and civil relations are still to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not release children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care toward their children. Nor are husbands and wives released from the duties proper to their relation. And so of all other less relations, whether natural, domestic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the *fellowship* of the Christian church. The true notion of the *visible church* of Christ, is that part of mankind, which, as his people, is united in upholding his appointed worship. And the notion of a *particular* visible church of Christ, is a particular society of worshippers, or of visible saints, united for the social worship of God according to his institutions or ordinances. One great and main privilege then, which the members of such a church enjoy, is fellowship in the worship which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowship, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worship.

He who is the mouth of the worshipping congregation in offering up

public prayers, is the mouth only of the worshipping society. But the excommunicated are cast out of that society. The church may and ought to pray *for* such. But they cannot have *fellowship* with such in prayer. The minister, when speaking in prayer, doth not speak in *their* name; he speaks only in the name of the *united society* of visible saints or worshippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them as the servants or worshippers of God. But, as was observed before, excommunicated persons are in this respect cast out of the charity of the church, and it looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as such.

So when a congregation of visible saints joins in singing the praises of God, as the psalmist says, Psa. 34:3. "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with those who are, in their charitable estimation, fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers of God. They do it not as joining with heathens; nor do the people of God say to the open enemies of God, remaining such, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they say it to their brethren in God's service. If we ought not to *join* with excommunicated persons in familiar society, much less ought we to hold *fellowship* with them in solemn worship, though they may be present.

4. There are privileges of a more *internal* nature, which those who are members of the visible church enjoy, from which excommunicated persons are cut off. They being God's covenant-people, are in the way of covenant-blessings; and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings. But the excommunicated are, in a sense, cast out of God's sight, into a land of banishment, as Cain was, though not debarred from common means. Gen. 4:14, 16. They are not in the way of those smiles of providence, those tokens of God's favor, and that light of God's countenance, like those who are within. Nor, as they are cast out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have. — Thus far I have considered the *privative* part of the punishment of excommunication. — I now

proceed,

2. To the *positive* part, which is expressed by being delivered to Satan, in verse 5. By which two things seem to be signified:

(1) A being delivered over to the *calamities* to which they are subject, who belong to the visible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thrust out from among the visible people of God; so they are to be looked upon, in most respects at least, as being in the miserable, deplorable circumstances in which those are who are under the visible tyranny of the devil, as the heathens are. And in many respects, they doubtless suffer the cruel tyranny of the devil, in a manner agreeable to their condition, being cast out into his visible kingdom.

(2) It is reasonable to suppose that God is wont to make the devil the *instrument* of those peculiar, severe chastisements which their apostasy deserves. As they deserve more severe chastisement than the heathens, and are delivered to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh. So we may well suppose, either that God is wont to let Satan loose, sorely to molest them outwardly or inwardly, and by such severe means to destroy the flesh, and to humble them; or that he suffers the devil to take possession of them dreadfully to harden them, and so to destroy them for ever. For although what men are to aim at, is only the destruction of the flesh, yet whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of themselves, is as God's sovereign disposal. — So much for the nature of excommunication.

Secondly, I come to show by whom the punishment is to be inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by *Christ himself*. That is imported in the definition, that it is *according to his will*, and to the directions of his word. And therefore he is to be looked upon as *principal* in it, and we ought to esteem it as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth personally inflicting it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done *ministerially*. They do not act of themselves in this, any more than in preaching the Word. When the Word is preached, it is the word of Christ which is spoken, as the

preacher speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador. So when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of Christ, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Christ. — Therefore it is promised, that when it is duly done, it shall be confirmed in heaven; *i.e.* Christ will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act. And he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himself. He will look on the person, and treat him as cast out and delivered to Satan by himself; and if he repent not, will for ever reject him: Mat. 18:18. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." John 20:23. "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." — I shall now, as was proposed,

II. Endeavor to show who are the proper *subjects* of excommunication. They are those members of the church who are now become visibly wicked; for the very name and nature of the visible church show, that it is a society of visible saints, or visibly holy persons. When any of these visible saints become visibly wicked men, they ought to be cast out of the church. Now, the members of the church become visibly wicked by these two things:

First, by *gross sin*. Saints may be guilty of other sins, and very often are, without throwing any just stumbling-block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Christian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily short-comings of the best of men, do not ordinarily obstruct the charity of their brethren. But when they fall into any gross sin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed some gross sin hath doubtless much more practiced less and more secret sins; and so we doubt concerning the soundness and sincerity of his heart. Therefore all those who commit any gross sin, as they obstruct the charity of their brethren, are proper subjects of discipline. And unless they confess their sin, and manifest their repentance, are proper subjects of excommunication. — This leads me to say,

Second, that the members of the church do especially become visibly wicked, when they remain *impenitent* in their sins, after proper means used to reclaim them. Merely being guilty of any gross sin, is a stumbling-

block to charity, unless repentance immediately succeed; but especially when the guilty person remains obstinate and contumacious. In such a case he is most clearly a visible wicked person, and therefore to be dealt with as such; to be cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong. — Nor is contumacy in *gross* sins only a sufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apostle commands us to inflict this censure, not only on those who are guilty of the gross sins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also on those who are guilty of covetousness, railing, and extortion, which, at least in some degrees of them, are too generally esteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. 16:17, the same apostle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Thes. 3:14, to excommunicate everyone who should "not obey his word by that epistle." Now, according to these precepts, everyone who doth not observe the doctrine of the apostles, and their word contained in their epistles, and so, by parity of reason, the divine instructions contained in the other parts of Scripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that *contumacy* and *impenitence* in any real and manifest sin whatsoever, deserve excommunication.

III. I come to speak of the *ends* of this ecclesiastical ensure. The special ends of it are these three:

First, that the church may be kept *pure*, and the ordinances of God not be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verse 6, etc. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." — When the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jesus Christ the head and founder of the church, the religion of the gospel, and the church itself, are dishonored and exposed to contempt. — And that the other members themselves may not be defiled, it is necessary that they bear a testimony against sin, by censuring it whenever it appears among them, especially in the grosser acts of wickedness. If they neglect so to do, they contract guilt by the very

neglect. And not only so, but they expose themselves to learn the same vices which they tolerate in others; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Hence that earnest caution of the apostle, Heb. 12:15. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and *thereby many be defiled*."

Second, that others may be *deterred* from wickedness. As the neglect of proper censure, with respect to visibly wicked church-members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the same wickedness. So the infliction of proper censure tends to restrain others, not only from the same wickedness, but from sin in general. This therefore is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the punishments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moses, Deu. 13:11. "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you."

Third, that the persons themselves may be *reclaimed*, and that their souls may be saved. When other more gentle means have been used in vain, then it is the duty of the church to use this, which is more severe, in order to bring them to conviction, shame, and humiliation. And that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with disrespect, they may be convinced how they deserve to be for ever disowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deserve forever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the instrument of their chastisement, they may learn how they deserve to be tormented by him, without any rest day or night, forever and ever. — This, with the counsels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the last mean that the church is to use, in order to reclaim those members which are become visibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected is destruction without remedy.

APPLICATION

I shall apply this subject in a brief use of exhortation to this church, to maintain strictly the proper discipline of the gospel in general, and particularly that part of it which consists in excommunication. To this end I shall just suggest to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate visible wickedness in your members, you will

greatly *dishonor* God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the religion which you profess, the church in general, and yourselves in particular. As those members of the church who practice wickedness, bring dishonor upon the whole body, so do those who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holiness in his servants; that Christ doth not require it in his disciples; that the religion of the gospel is not a holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy servants of God; and that this church, in particular, hath no regard to holiness or true virtue.

2. Your *own good* loudly calls you to the same thing. From what hath been already said, you see how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is easily communicated by reason of the natural depravity, in a degree at least, remaining in the best of men. — Beside, if strict discipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the spread of wickedness, but to make you more fruitful in holiness. If you know that the eyes of your brethren observe all your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded against sin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits of the Spirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of those who are *without* should be another motive. What the apostle saith with reference to another subject, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25, is perfectly applicable to the case before us: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If strict discipline, and thereby strict morals, were maintained in the church, it would in all probability be one of the most powerful means of conviction and conversion towards those who are without.

4. *Benevolence* towards your offending brethren themselves, calls upon you to maintain discipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to see them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compassion is moved, shall we be disposed to use all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of discipline contained in the gospel are the most proper, and best adapted to this end, that infinite wisdom itself could devise.

Even excommunication is instituted for this very end, *the destruction of the flesh,* and *the salvation of the spirit*. If, therefore, we have any love of benevolence to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifest it, in executing strictly the rules of gospel-discipline, and even excommunication itself, whenever it is necessary.

5. But the absolute *authority of Christ* ought to be sufficient in this case, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many passages in the Scripture, wherein strict discipline is expressly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true disciples of Christ, if you live in the neglect of these plain positive commands? "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments;" and, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But, "he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

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A Farewell Sermon

Subject: Ministers and people that are under their care, must meet one another before Christ's tribunal at the day of judgment.

The apostle, in the preceding part of the chapter, declares what great troubles he met with in the course of his ministry. In the text, and two foregoing verses, he declares what were his comforts and supports under the troubles he met with. There are four things in particular.

1. That he had approved himself to his own conscience, verse 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and

godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards."

2. Another thing he speaks of as matter of comfort, is that as he had approved himself to his own conscience, so he had also to the consciences of his hearers, the Corinthians, to whom he now wrote, and that they should approve of him at the day of judgment.

3. The hope he had of seeing the blessed fruit of his labors and sufferings in the ministry, in their happiness and glory, in that great day of accounts.

4. That in his ministry among the Corinthians, he had approved himself to his Judge, who would approve and reward his faithfulness in that day.

These three last particulars are signified in my text, and the preceding verse, and indeed all the four are implied in the text. It is implied that the Corinthians had acknowledged him as their spiritual father, and as one that had been faithful among them, and as the means of their future joy and glory at the day of judgment. It is implied that the apostle expected at that time to have a joyful meeting with them before the Judge, and with joy to behold their glory, as the fruit of his labors, and so they would be his rejoicing. It is implied also that he then expected to be approved of the great Judge, when he and they should meet together before him, and that he would then acknowledge his fidelity, and that this had been the means of their glory, and that thus he would, as it were, give them to him as his crown of rejoicing. But this the apostle could not hope for, unless he had the testimony of his own conscience in his favor. And therefore the words do imply, in the strongest manner, that he had approved himself to his own conscience.

There is one thing implied in each of these particulars, and in every part of the text, which I shall make the subject of my present discourse, *viz.*

DOCTRINE.

Ministers, and the people that have been under their care, must meet one another before Christ's tribunal at the day of judgment.

Ministers, and the people that have been under their care, must be parted in this world, how well soever they have been united. If they are not separated before, they must be parted by death, and they may be separated while life is continued. We live in a world of change, where nothing is certain or stable, and where a little time, a few revolutions of the sun, brings to pass strange things, surprising alterations, in particular persons in families, in towns and churches, in countries and nations. It often happens, that those who seem most united, in a little time are most disunited, and at the greatest distance. Thus ministers and people, between whom there has been the greatest mutual regard and strictest union, may not only differ in their judgments, and be alienated in affection, but one may rend from the other, and all relation between them be dissolved. The minister may be removed to a distant place, and they may never have any more to do one with another in this world. But if it be so, there is one meeting more that they must have, and that is in the last great day of accounts. Here I would show,

I. In what *manner* ministers, and the people which have been under their care, shall meet one another at the day of judgment.
II. For what *purposes*.
III. For what *reasons* God has so ordered it, that ministers and their people shall then meet together in such a manner, and for such purposes.

I. I would show, in some particulars, in what manner ministers and the people which have been under their care, shall meet one another at the day of judgment.

First, they shall not meet at the day merely as all the world must then meet together. I would observe a difference in two things.

1. As to a clear actual view, and distinct knowledge and notice, of each other.

Although the whole world will be then present, all mankind of all generations gathered in one vast assembly, with all of the angelic nature, both elect and fallen angels, yet we need not suppose that everyone will have a distinct and particular knowledge of each individual of the whole assembled multitude, which will undoubtedly consist of many millions of

millions. Though it is probable that men's capacities will be much greater than in their present state, yet they will not be infinite. Though their understanding and comprehension will be vastly extended, yet men will not be deified. There will probably be a very enlarged view that particular persons will have of the various parts and members of that vast assembly, and so of the proceedings of that great day. But yet it must needs be, that according to the nature of finite minds, some persons and some things, at that day, shall fall more under the notice of particular persons than others. This (as we may well suppose) according as they shall have a nearer concern with some than others in the transactions of the day. There will be special reason why those who have had special concerns together in this world, in their state of probation, and whose mutual affairs will be then to be tried and judged, should especially be set in one another's view. Thus we may suppose, that rulers and subjects, earthly judges and those whom they have judged, neighbors who have had mutual converse, dealings, and contests, heads of families and their children and servants, shall then meet, and in a peculiar distinction be set together. And especially will it be thus with ministers and their people. It is evident by the text, that these shall be in each other's view, shall distinctly know each other, and shall have particular notice one of another at that time.

2. They shall meet together, as having special concern one with another in the great transactions of that day.

Although they shall meet the whole world at that time, yet they will not have any immediate and particular concern with all. Yea, the far greater part of those who shall then be gathered together, will be such as they have had no intercourse with in their state of probation, and so will have no mutual concerns to be judged of. But as to ministers and the people that have been under their care, they will be such as have had much immediate concern one with another, in matters of the greatest moment. Therefore they especially must meet, and be brought together before the Judge, as having special concern one with another in the design and business of that great day of accounts. — Thus their meeting, as to the manner of it, will be diverse from the meeting of mankind in general.

Second, their meeting at the day of judgment will be very diverse from

their meetings one with another in this world.

Ministers and their people, while their relation continues, often meet together in this world. They are wont to meet from sabbath to sabbath, and at other times, for the public worship of God, and administration of ordinances, and the solemn services of God's house. And besides these meetings, they have also occasions to meet for the determining and managing their ecclesiastical affairs, for the exercise of church discipline, and the settling and adjusting those things which concern the purity and good order of public administrations. But their meeting at the day of judgment will be exceeding diverse, in its manner and circumstances, from any meetings and interviews they have one with another in the present state. I would observe how, in a few particulars.

1. Now they meet together in a preparatory mutable state, but then in an unchangeable state.

Now *sinners* in the congregation meet their minister in a state wherein they are capable of a saving change, capable of being turned, through God's blessing on the ministrations and labors of their pastor, from the power of Satan unto God; and being brought out of a state of guilt, condemnation, and wrath, to a state of peace and favor with God, to the enjoyment of the privileges of his children, and a title to their eternal inheritance. And *saints* now meet their minister with great remains of corruption, and sometimes under great spiritual difficulties and affliction: and therefore are yet the proper subjects of means for a happy alteration of their state, which they have reason to hope for in the attendance on ordinances, and of which God is pleased commonly to make his ministers the instruments. Ministers and their people now meet in order to the bringing to pass such happy changes: they are the great benefits sought in their solemn meetings.

But when they shall meet together at the day of judgment, it will be far otherwise. They will all meet in an unchangeable state. *Sinners* will be in an unchangeable state. They who then shall be under the guilt and power of sin, and have the wrath of God abiding on them, shall be beyond all remedy or possibility of change, and shall meet their ministers without any hopes of relief or remedy, or getting any good by their means. And as

for the *saints*, they will be already perfectly delivered from all their corruption, temptation, and calamities of every kind, and set forever out of their reach; and no deliverance, no happy alteration, will remain to be accomplished in the use of means of grace, under the administrations of ministers. It will then be pronounced, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

2. Then they shall meet together in a state of clear, certain, and infallible light.

Ministers are set as guides and teachers, and are represented in Scripture as lights set up in the churches, and in the present state meet their people, from time to time, in order to instruct and enlighten them, to correct their mistakes, and to be a voice behind them, when they turn aside to the right hand or the left, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it;” to evince and confirm the truth by exhibiting the proper evidences of it. They to refute errors and corrupt opinions, to convince the erroneous, and establish the doubting. But when Christ shall come to judgment, every error and false opinion shall be detected. All deceit and delusion shall vanish away before the light of that day, as the darkness of the night vanishes at the appearance of the rising sun. Every doctrine of the Word of God shall then appear in full evidence, and none shall remain unconvinced. All shall know the truth with the greatest certainty, and there shall be no mistakes to rectify.

Now ministers and their people may disagree in their judgments concerning some matters of religion, and may sometimes meet to confer together concerning those things wherein they differ, and to hear the reasons that may be offered on one side and the other; and all may be ineffectual as to any conviction of the truth. They may meet and part again, no more agreed than before, and that side which was in the wrong may remain so still. Sometimes the meetings of ministers with their people, in such a case of disagreeing sentiments, are attended with unhappy debate and controversy, managed with much prejudice and want of candor; not tending to light and conviction, but rather to confirm and increase darkness, and establish opposition to the truth, and

alienation of affection one from another. But when they shall meet together at the day of judgment, before the tribunal of the great Judge, the mind and will of Christ will be made known, and there shall no longer be any debate or difference of opinions. The evidence of the truth shall appear beyond all dispute, and all controversies shall be finally and forever decided.

Now ministers meet their people in order to enlighten and awaken the consciences of sinners: setting before them the great evil and danger of sin, the strictness of God's law, their own wickedness of heart and practice, the great guilt they are under, the wrath that abides upon them, and their impotence, blindness, poverty, and helpless and undone condition. But all is often in vain. They remain still, notwithstanding all their ministers can say, stupid and unawakened, and their consciences unconvinced. But it will not be so at their last meeting at the day of judgment. Sinners, when they shall meet their minister before their great Judge, will not meet him with a stupid conscience. They will then be fully convinced of the truth of those things which they formerly heard from him, concerning the greatness and terrible majesty of God, his holiness and hatred of sin, his awful justice in punishing it, the strictness of his law and the dreadfulness and truth of his threatenings, and their own unspeakable guilt and misery. And they shall never more be insensible of these things. The eyes of conscience will now be fully enlightened, and never shall be blinded again. The mouth of conscience shall now be opened, and never shall be shut any more.

Now ministers meet with their people, in public and private, in order to enlighten them concerning the state of their souls; to open and apply the rules of God's Word to them, in order to their searching their own hearts, and discerning their state. But now ministers have no infallible discernment of the state of their people; and the most skillful of them are liable to mistakes, and often are mistaken in things of this nature. Nor are the people able certainly to know the state of their minister, or one another's state: very often those pass among them for saints, and it may be eminent saints, that are grand hypocrites. And on the other hand, those are sometimes censured, or hardly received into their charity, that are indeed some of God's jewels. And nothing is more common than for

men to be mistaken concerning their *own* state. Many that are abominable to God, and the children of his wrath, think highly of themselves, as his precious saints and dear children. Yea, there is reason to think that often some that are most bold in their confidence of their safe and happy state, and think themselves not only true saints, but the most eminent saints in the congregation, are in a peculiar manner a smoke in God's nostrils. And thus it undoubtedly often is in those congregations where the Word of God is most faithfully dispensed, notwithstanding all that ministers can say in their clearest explications, and most searching applications of the doctrines and rules of God's Word to the souls of their hearers. But in the day of judgment they shall have another sort of meeting. Then the secrets of every heart shall be made manifest, and every man's state shall be perfectly known. 1 Cor. 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." Then none shall be deceived concerning his own state, nor shall be any more in doubt about it. There shall be an eternal end to all the self-conceit and vain hopes of deluded hypocrites, and all the doubts and fears of sincere Christians. And then shall all know the state of one another's souls. The people shall know whether their minister has been sincere and faithful, and the minister shall know the state of every one of their people, and to who the word and ordinances of God have been a savor of life unto life, and to whom a savor of death unto death.

Now in this present state it often happens that when ministers and people meet together to debate and manage their ecclesiastical affairs, especially in a state of controversy, they are ready to judge and censure with regard to each other's views, designs, and the principles and ends by which each is influenced, and are greatly mistaken in their judgment and wrong one another in their censures. But at that future meeting, things will be set in a true and perfect light, and the principles and aims that everyone has acted from, shall be certainly known. There will be an end to all errors of this kind, and all unrighteous censures.

3. In this world, ministers and their people often meet together to hear of and wait upon an unseen Lord. But at the judgment, they shall meet in

his most immediate and visible presence.

Ministers, who now often meet their people to preach to them the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, to convince them that there is a God and declare to them what manner of being he is, and to convince them that he governs and will judge the world, and that there is a future state of rewards and punishments, and to preach to them a Christ in heaven, at the right hand of God, in an unseen world — shall then meet their people in the most immediate sensible presence of this great God, Savior, and Judge, appearing in the most plain, visible, and open manner, with great glory, with all his holy angels, before them and the whole world. They shall not meet them to hear about an absent Christ, an unseen Lord, and future Judge; but to appear before that Judge — being set together in the presence of that supreme Lord — in his immense glory and awful majesty, of whom they have heard so often in their meetings together on earth.

4. The meeting at the last day, of ministers and the people that have been under their care, will not be attended by anyone with a careless, heedless heart.

With such a heart are their meetings often attended in this world by many persons, having little regard to him whom they pretend unitedly to adore in the solemn duties of his public worship, taking little heed to their own thoughts or frame of their minds, not attending to the business they are engaged in, or considering the end for which they are come together. But at that great day there will not be one careless heart: no sleeping, no wandering of mind from the great concern of the meeting, no inattentiveness to the business of the day, no regardlessness of the presence they are in or of those great things which they shall hear from Christ, or that they formerly heard from him, and of him, by their ministers in their state of trial, or which they shall now hear their ministers declaring concerning them before their Judge.

Having observed these things, concerning the manner and circumstances of this future meeting, before the tribunal of Christ at the day of judgment, I now proceed,

II. To observe to what *purposes* they shall then meet.

First, to give an account, before the great Judge, of their behavior one to another, in the relation they bore to each other in this world.

Ministers are sent forth by Christ to their people on his business. They are his servants and messengers; and, when they have finished their service, they must return to their master to give him an account of what they have done, and of the entertainment they have had in performing their ministry. Thus we find, in Luke 14:16-21, that when the servant who was sent forth to call the guests to the great supper, had finished his appointed service, he returned to his master, and gave him an account of what he had done, and of the entertainment he had received. And when the master, being angry, sent his servant to others, he returns again and gives his master an account of his conduct and success. So we read, in Heb. 13:17, of ministers or rulers in the house of God, that "they watch for souls, as those that must give account." And we see by the forementioned Luke 14 that ministers must give an account to their master, not only of their own behavior in the discharge of their office, but also of their people's reception of them, and of the treatment they have met with among them.

Faithful ministers will then give an account with joy, concerning those who have received them well, and made a good improvement of their ministry; and these will be given them, at that day, as their crown of rejoicing. And, at the same time, they will give an account of the ill treatment of such as have not well received them and their messages from Christ. They will meet these, not as they used to do in this world, to counsel and warn them, but to bear witness against them, as their judges and assessors with Christ, to condemn them. And, on the other hand, the people will at that day rise up in judgment against wicked and unfaithful ministers, who have sought their own temporal interest more than the good of the souls of their flock.

Second, at that time ministers, and the people who have been under their care, shall meet together before Christ, that he may judge between them, as to any controversies which have subsisted between them in this world.

It often comes to pass in this evil world, that great differences and controversies arise between ministers and the people under their pastoral care. Though they are under the greatest obligations to live in peace, above persons in almost any relation whatever, and although contests and dissensions between persons so related are the most unhappy and terrible in their consequences on many accounts of any sort of contentions, yet how frequent have such contentions been! Sometimes a people contest with their ministers about their doctrine, sometimes about their administrations and conduct, and sometimes about their maintenance. Sometimes such contests continue a long time, and sometimes they are decided in this world, according to the prevailing interest of one party or the other, rather than by the Word of God, and the reason of things. And sometimes such controversies never have any proper determination in this world.

But at the day of judgment there will be a full, perfect, and everlasting decision of them. The infallible Judge, the infinite fountain of light, truth, and justice, will judge between the contending parties, and will declare what is the truth, who is in the right, and what is agreeable to his mind and will. And in order hereto, the parties must stand together before him at the last day, which will be the great day of finishing and determining all controversies, rectifying all mistakes, and abolishing all unrighteous judgments, errors, and confusions, which have before subsisted in the world of mankind.

Third, ministers, and the people that have been under their care, must meet together at that time to receive an eternal sentence and retribution from the Judge, in the presence of each other, according to their behavior in the relation they stood in one to another in the present state.

The Judge will not only declare justice, but he will do justice between ministers and their people. He will declare what is right between them, approving him that has been just and faithful, and condemning the unjust. Perfect truth and equity shall take place in the sentence which he passes, in the rewards he bestows, and the punishments which he inflicts. There shall be a glorious reward to faithful ministers, to those who have been successful. Dan. 12:3, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as

the stars for ever and ever:" and also to those who have been faithful, and yet not successful, Isa. 49:4, "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward with my God." And those who have well received and entertained them shall be gloriously rewarded, Mat. 10:40, 41, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." Such people, and their faithful ministers, shall be each other's crown of rejoicing, 1 Thes. 2:19, 20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." And in the text, "We are your rejoicing, as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." But they that evil entreat Christ's faithful ministers, especially in that wherein they are faithful, shall be severely punished; Mat. 10:14, 15, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city." Deu. 33:8-11, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with thy holy one. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." On the other hand, those ministers who are found to have been unfaithful, shall have a most terrible punishment. See Eze. 33:6; Mat. 23:1-33.

Thus justice shall be administered at the great day to ministers and their people: and to that end they shall meet together, that they may not only receive justice to themselves, but see justice done to the other party. For this is the end of that great day, to reveal or declare the righteous judgment of God; Rom. 2:5. Ministers shall have justice done them, and they shall see justice done to their people. And the people shall receive justice themselves from their Judge, and shall see justice done to their minister. And so all things will be adjusted and settled forever between them: everyone being sentenced and recompensed according to his works, either in receiving and wearing a crown of eternal joy and glory, or

in suffering everlasting shame and pain. — I come now to the next thing proposed, *viz.*

III. To give some *reasons* why we may suppose God has so ordered it, that ministers, and the people that have been under their care, shall meet together at the day of judgment, in such a manner and for such purposes.

There are two things which I would now observe.

First, the mutual concerns of ministers and their people are of the greatest importance.

The Scripture declares that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. It is fit that all the concerns and all the behavior of mankind, both public and private, should be brought at last before God's tribunal, and finally determined by an infallible judge. But it is especially requisite that it should be thus, as to affairs of very great importance.

Now the mutual concerns of a Christian minister and his church and congregation, are of the vastest importance: in many respects, of much greater moment than the temporal concerns of the greatest earthly monarchs, and their kingdoms or empires. It is of vast consequence how ministers discharge their office, and conduct themselves towards their people in the work of the ministry, and in affairs appertaining to it. It is also a matter of vast importance, how a people receive and entertain a faithful minister of Christ, and what improvement they make of his ministry. These things have a more immediate and direct respect to the great and last end for which man was made, and the eternal welfare of mankind, than any of the temporal concerns of men, whether private or public. And therefore it is especially fit that these affairs should be brought into judgment, and openly determined and settled, in truth and righteousness, and that to this end, ministers and their people should meet together before the omniscient and infallible Judge.

Second, the mutual concerns of ministers and their people have a special

relation to the main things appertaining to the day of judgment.

They have a special relation to that great and divine person who will then appear as Judge. Ministers are his messengers, sent forth by him, and in their office and administrations among their people, represent his person, stand in his stead, as those that are sent to declare his mind, to do his work, and to speak and act in his name. And therefore it is especially fit that they should return to him to give an account of their work and success. The king is judge of all his subjects, they are all accountable to him. But it is more especially requisite that the king's ministers, who are especially entrusted with the administrations of his kingdom, and who are sent forth on some special negotiation, should return to him, to give an account of themselves, and their discharge of their trust, and the reception they have met with.

Ministers are not only messengers of the person who at the last day will appear as Judge, but the errand they are sent upon, and the affairs they have committed to them as his ministers, most immediately concern his honor, and the interest of his kingdom. The work they are sent upon is to promote the designs of his administration and government, therefore their business with their people has a near relation to the day of judgment. For the great end of that day is completely to settle and establish the affairs of his kingdom, to adjust all things that pertain to it, that everything that is opposite to the interests of his kingdom may be removed, and that everything which contributes to the completeness and glory of it may be perfected and confirmed, that this great King may receive his due honor and glory.

Again, the mutual concerns of ministers and their people have a direct relation to the concerns of the day of judgment, as the business of ministers with their people is to promote the eternal salvation of the souls of men, and their escape from eternal damnation. The day of judgment is the day appointed for that end, openly to decide and settle men's eternal state, to fix some in a state of eternal salvation, and to bring their salvation to its utmost consummation, and to fix others in a state of everlasting damnation and most perfect misery. The mutual concerns of ministers and people have a most direct relation to the day of judgment, as the very design of the work of the ministry is the people's preparation

for that day. Ministers are sent to warn them of the approach of that day, to forewarn them of the dreadful sentence then to be pronounced on the wicked, and declare to them the blessed sentence then to be pronounced on the righteous, and to use means with them that they may escape the wrath which is then to come on the ungodly, and obtain the reward then to be bestowed on the saints.

And as the mutual concerns of ministers and their people have so near and direct a relation to that day, it is especially fit that those concerns should there settled and issued, and that in order to this, ministers and their people should meet and appear together before the great Judge at that day.

APPLICATION

The improvement I would make of the subject is to lead the people here present, who have been under my pastoral care, to some reflections, and give them some advice suitable to our present circumstances, relating to what has been lately done in order to our being separated, but expecting to meet each other before the great tribunal at the day of judgment.

The deep and serious consideration of our future most solemn meeting, is certainly most suitable at such a time as this. There having so lately been that done, which, in all probability, will (as to the relation we have heretofore stood in) be followed with an everlasting separation.

How often have we met together in the house of God in this relation! How often have I spoke to you, instructed, counseled, warned, directed, and fed you, and administered ordinances among you, as the people which were committed to my care, and of whose precious souls I had the charge! But in all probability this never will be again.

The prophet Jeremiah, chap. 25:3, puts the people in mind how long he had labored among them in the work of the ministry: “From the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day (that is, the three and twentieth year), the word of the Lord came unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking.” I am not about to compare myself with the prophet Jeremiah, but in this respect I

can say as he did that “I have spoken the Word of God to you, unto the three and twentieth year, rising early and speaking.” It was three and twenty years, the 15th day of last February, since I have labored in the work of the ministry, in the relation of a pastor to this church and congregation. And though my strength has been weakness, having always labored under great infirmity of body, besides my insufficiency for so great a charge in other respects, yet I have not spared my feeble strength, but have exerted it for the good of your souls. I can appeal to you, as the apostle does to his hearers, Gal. 4:13, “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you.” I have spent the prime of my life and strength in labors for your eternal welfare. You are my witnesses that what strength I have had I have not neglected in idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly schemes, and managing temporal affairs, for the advancement of my outward estate, and aggrandizing myself and family. But [I] have given myself to the work of the ministry, laboring in it night and day, rising early and applying myself to this great business to which Christ appointed me. I have found the work of the ministry among you to be a great work indeed, a work of exceeding care, labor and difficulty. Many have been the heavy burdens that I have borne in it, to which my strength has been very unequal. God called me to bear these burdens; and I bless his name that he has so supported me as to keep me from sinking under them, and that his power herein has been manifested in my weakness. So that although I have often been troubled on every side, yet I have not been distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed. — But now I have reason to think my work is finished which I had to do as your minister: you have publicly rejected me, and my opportunities cease.

How highly therefore does it now become us to consider of that time when we must meet one another before the chief Shepherd! When I must give an account of my stewardship, of the service I have done for, and the reception and treatment I have had among the people to whom he sent me. And you must give an account of your own conduct towards me, and the improvement you have made of these three and twenty years of my ministry. For then both you and I must appear together, and we both must give an account, in order to an infallible, righteous and eternal sentence to be passed upon us, by him who will judge us with respect to

all that we have said or done in our meeting here, and all our conduct one towards another in the house of God and elsewhere. [He] will try our hearts, and manifest our thoughts, and the principles and frames of our minds. He will judge us with respect to all the controversies which have subsisted between us, with the strictest impartiality, and will examine our treatment of each other in those controversies. There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid which shall not be known. All will be examined in the searching, penetrating light of God's omniscience and glory, and by him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Truth and right shall be made plainly to appear, being stripped of every veil. And all error, falsehood, unrighteousness, and injury shall be laid open, stripped of every disguise. Every specious pretense, every cavil, and all false reasoning shall vanish in a moment, as not being able to bear the light of that day. And then our hearts will be turned inside out, and the secrets of them will be made more plainly to appear than our outward actions do now. Then it shall appear what the ends are which we have aimed at, what have been the governing principles which we have acted from, and what have been the dispositions we have exercised in our ecclesiastical disputes and contests. Then it will appear whether I acted uprightly, and from a truly conscientious, careful regard to my duty to my great Lord and Master, in some former ecclesiastical controversies, which have been attended with exceeding unhappy circumstances and consequences. It will appear whether there was any just cause for the resentment which was manifested on those occasions. And then our late grand controversy, concerning the qualifications necessary for admission to the privileges of members, in complete standing, in the visible church of Christ, will be examined and judged in all its parts and circumstances, and the whole set forth in a clear, certain, and perfect light. Then it will appear whether the doctrine which I have preached and published concerning this matter be Christ's own doctrine, whether he will not own it as one of the precious truths which have proceeded from his own mouth, and vindicate and honor as such before the whole universe. Then it will appear what is meant by "the man that comes without the wedding garment;" for that is the day spoken of, Mat. 22:13, wherein such a one shall be "bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And then it will appear whether, in declaring this doctrine, and acting agreeable to it, and in my general conduct in the

affair, I have been influenced from any regard to my own temporal interest, or honor, or desire to appear wiser than others, or have acted from any sinister, secular views whatsoever, and whether what I have done has not been from a careful, strict, and tender regard to the will of my Lord and Master, and because I dare not offend him, being satisfied what his will was, after a long, diligent, impartial, and prayerful inquiry. Then it will be seen whether I had this constantly in view and prospect, to engage me to great solicitude not rashly to determine the question, that such a determination would not be for my temporal interest, but every way against it, bringing a long series of extreme difficulties, and plunging me into an abyss of trouble and sorrow. And then it will appear whether my people have done their duty to their pastor with respect to this matter; whether they have shown a right temper and spirit on this occasion; whether they have done me justice in hearing, attending to and considering what I had to say in evidence of what I believed and taught as part of the counsel of God; whether I have been treated with that impartiality, candor, and regard which the just Judge esteemed due; and whether, in the many steps which have been taken, and the many things that have been said and done in the course of this controversy, righteousness, and charity, and Christian decorum have been maintained; or, if otherwise, to how great a degree these things have been violated. Then every step of the conduct of each of us in this affair, from first to last, and the spirit we have exercised in all, shall be examined and manifested, and our own consciences shall speak plain and loud, and each of us shall be convinced, and the world shall know; and never shall there be any more mistake, misrepresentation, or misapprehension of the affair to eternity.

This controversy is now probably brought to an issue between you and me as to this world. It has issued in the event of the week before last, but it must have another decision at that great day, which certainly will come, when you and I shall meet together before the great judgment seat. Therefore I leave it to that time, and shall say no more about it at present. — But I would now proceed to address myself particularly to several sorts of persons.

I. To those who are *professors* of godliness amongst us.

I would now call you to a serious consideration of that great day wherein you must meet him who has heretofore been your pastor, before the Judge whose eyes are as a flame of fire. — I have endeavored, according to my best ability, to search the Word of God, with regard to the distinguishing notes of true piety, those by which persons might best discover their state, and most surely and clearly judge of themselves. And these rules and marks I have from time to time applied to you, in the preaching of the Word to the utmost of my skill, and in the most plain and search manner that I have been able, in order to the detecting the deceived hypocrite, and establishing the hopes and comforts of the sincere. And yet it is to be feared, that after all that I have done, I now leave some of you in a deceived, deluded state. For it is not to be supposed that among several hundred professors, none are deceived.

Henceforward I am like to have no more opportunity to take the care and charge of your souls, to examine and search them. But still I entreat you to remember and consider the rules which I have often laid down to you during my ministry, with a solemn regard to the future day when you and I must meet together before our Judge, when the uses of examination you have heard from me must be rehearsed again before you, and those rules of trial must be tried, and it will appear whether they have been good or not. It will also appear whether you have impartially heard them, and tried yourselves by them. The Judge himself, who is infallible, will try both you and me. And after this none will be deceived concerning the state of their souls.

I have often put you in mind, that whatever your pretenses to experiences, discoveries, comforts, and joys have been, at that day everyone will be judged according to his works, and then you will find it so. May you have a minister of greater knowledge of the Word of God, and better acquaintance with soul cases, and of greater skill in applying himself to souls, whose discourses may be more searching and convincing, that such of you as have held fast deceit under my preaching, may have your eyes opened by his: that you may be undeceived before that great day.

What means and helps for instruction and self-examination you may hereafter have is uncertain. But one thing is certain: that the time is

short, your opportunity for rectifying mistakes in so important a concern will soon come to an end. We live in a world of great changes. There is now a great change come to pass. You have withdrawn yourselves from my ministry, under which you have continued for so many years. But the time is coming, and will soon come, when you will pass out of time into eternity, and so will pass from under all means of grace whatsoever.

The greater part of you who are professors of godliness have (to use the phrase of the apostle) "acknowledged me, in part:" you have heretofore acknowledged me to be your spiritual father, the instrument of the greatest good to you that can be obtained by any of the children of men. Consider of that day when you and I shall meet before our Judge, when it shall be examined whether you have had from me the treatment which is due to spiritual children, and whether you have treated me as you ought to have treated a spiritual father. — As the relation of a natural parent brings great obligations on children in the sight of God, so much more, in many respects, does the relation of a spiritual father bring great obligations on such of whose conversation and eternal salvation they suppose God has made them the instruments, 1 Cor. 4:15, "For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel."

II. Now I am taking my leave of this people I would apply myself to such among them as I leave in a *Christless*, graceless condition, and would call on such seriously to consider of that solemn day when they and I must meet before the Judge of the world.

My parting with you is, in some respects, in a peculiar manner a melancholy parting, inasmuch as I leave you in most melancholy circumstances, because I leave you in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, having the wrath of God abiding on you, and remaining under condemnation to everlasting misery and destruction. Seeing I must leave you, it would have been a comfortable and happy circumstance of our parting, if I had left you in Christ, safe and blessed in that sure refuge and glorious rest of the saints. But it is otherwise. I leave you far off, aliens and strangers, wretched subjects and captives of sin and Satan, and prisoners of vindictive justice: without Christ, and without God in the world.

Your consciences bear me witness that while I had opportunity, I have not ceased to warn you, and set before you your danger. I have studied to represent the misery and necessity of your circumstances in the clearest manner possible. I have tried all ways that I could think of tending to awaken your consciences, and make you sensible of the necessity of your improving your time, and being speedy in flying from the wrath to come, and thorough in the use of means for your escape and safety. I have diligently endeavored to find out and use the most powerful motives to persuade you to take care for your own welfare and salvation. I have not only endeavored to awaken you, that you might be moved with fear, but I have used my utmost endeavors to win you: I have sought out acceptable words, that if possible I might prevail upon you to forsake sin, and turn to God, and accept of Christ as your Savior and Lord. I have spent my strength very much in these things. But yet, with regard to you whom I am addressing, I have not been successful, but have this day reason to complain in those words, Jer. 6:29: "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away." It is to be feared that all my labors, as to many of you, have served no other purpose but to harden you, and that the word which I have preached, instead of being a savor of life unto life, has been a savor of death unto death. Though I shall not have any account to give for the future of such as have openly and resolutely renounced my ministry, as of a trust committed to me, yet remember you must give account for yourselves, of your care of your own souls, and your improvement of all means past and future, through your whole lives. God only knows what will become of your poor perishing souls, what means you may hereafter enjoy, or what disadvantages and temptations you may be under. May God in his mercy grant that however all past means have been unsuccessful, you may have future means which may have a new effect, and that the Word of God, as it shall be hereafter dispensed to you, may prove as the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. However, let me now at parting exhort and beseech you not wholly to forget the warnings you have had while under my ministry. When you and I shall meet at the day of judgment, then you will remember them. The sight of me, your former minister, on that occasion, will soon revive them in your memory; and that in a very affecting manner. O do not let

that be the first time that they are so revived.

You and I are now parting one from another as to this world. Let us labor that we may not be parted after our meeting at the last day. If I have been your faithful pastor (which will that day appear whether I have or no), then I shall be acquitted, and shall ascend with Christ. O do your part that in such a case, you may not be forced eternally to part from me, and all that have been faithful in Christ Jesus. *This* is a sorrowful parting, but *that* would be a more sorrowful. — This you may perhaps bear without being much affected with it, if you are not glad of it, but such a parting in that day will most deeply, sensibly, and dreadfully affect you.

III. I would address myself to those who are under some *awakenings*.

Blessed be God that there are some such, and that (although I have reason to fear I leave multitudes in this large congregation in a Christless state) yet I do not leave them all in total stupidity and carelessness about their souls. Some of you that I have reason to hope are under some awakenings, have acquainted me with your circumstances, which has a tendency to cause me, now I am leaving you, to take my leave with peculiar concern for you. What will be the issue of your present exercise of mind, I know not, but it will be known at that day, when you and I shall meet before the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore now be much in consideration of that day.

Now I am parting with this flock, I would once more press upon you the counsels I have heretofore given, to take heed of slightly so great a concern, to be thorough and in good earnest in the affair, and to beware of backsliding, to hold on and hold out to the end. And cry mightily to God, that these great changes which pass over this church and congregation do not prove your overthrow. There is great temptation in them, and the devil will undoubtedly seek to make his advantage of them, if possible to cause your present convictions and endeavors to be abortive. You had need to double your diligence, and watch and pray, lest you be overcome by temptation.

Whoever may hereafter stand related to you as your spiritual guide, my desire and prayer is that the great Shepherd of the sheep would have a

special respect to you, and be your guide (for there is none teacheth like him), and that he who is the infinite fountain of light, would "open your eyes, and turn you from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith that is in Christ;" that so in that great day, when I shall meet you again before your Judge and mine, we may meet in joyful and glorious circumstances, never to be separated any more.

IV. I would apply myself to the *young* people of the congregation.

Since I have been settled in the work of the ministry in this place, I have ever had a peculiar concern for the souls of the young people, and a desire that religion might flourish among them; and have especially exerted myself in order to it. Because I knew the special opportunity they had beyond others, and that ordinarily those for whom God intended mercy, were brought to fear and love him in their youth. And it has ever appeared to me a peculiarly amiable thing, to see young people walking in the ways of virtue and Christian piety, having their hearts purified and sweetened with a principle of divine love. How exceeding beautiful, and conducive to the adorning and happiness of the town, if the young people could be persuaded, when they meet together, to converse as Christians and as the children of God, avoiding impurity, levity and extravagance, keeping strictly to rules of virtue and conversing together of the things of God, and Christ, and heaven! This is what I have longed for, and it has been exceeding grievous to me when I have heard of vice, vanity and disorder among our youth. And so far as I know my own heart, it was from hence that I formerly led this church to some measures, for the suppressing vice among our young people, which gave so great offense, and by which I became so obnoxious. I have sought the good, and not the hurt of our young people. I have desired their truest honor and happiness, and not their reproach: knowing that true virtue and religion tended not only to the glory and felicity of young people in another world, but their greatest peace and prosperity, and highest dignity and honor in this world, and above all things to sweeten, and render pleasant and delightful, even the days of youth.

But whether I have loved you, and sought your good more or less, now

committing your souls to him who once committed the pastoral care of them to me — nothing remains, but only (as I am now taking my leave of you) earnestly to beseech you, from love to yourselves, if you have none to me, not to despise and forget the warnings and counsels I have so often given you. Remember the day when you and I must meet again before the great Judge of quick and dead, when it will appear whether the things I have taught you were true, whether the counsels I have given you were good, and whether I truly sought your welfare, and whether you have well improved my endeavors.

I have, from time to time, earnestly warned you against *frolicking* (as it is called), and some other liberties commonly taken by young people in the land. And whatever some may say in justification of such liberties and customs, and may laugh at warnings against them, I now leave you my parting testimony against such things, not doubting but God will approve and confirm it in that day when we shall meet before him.

V. I would apply myself to the *children* of the congregation, the lambs of this flock, who have been so long under my care.

I have just now said that I have had a peculiar concern for the young people, and in so saying I did not intend to exclude you. You are in youth, and in the most early youth. Therefore I have been sensible that if those that were young had a precious opportunity for their souls' good, you who are very young had, in many respects, a peculiarly precious opportunity. And accordingly I have not neglected you. I have endeavored to do the part of a faithful shepherd, in feeding the lambs as well as the sheep. Christ did once commit the care of your souls to me as your minister; and you know, dear children, how I have instructed you, and warned you from time to time. You know how I have often called you together for that end, and some of you, sometimes, have seemed to be affected with what I have said to you. But I am afraid it has had no saving effect as to many of you, but that you remain still in an unconverted condition, without any real saving work wrought in your souls, convincing you thoroughly of your sin and misery, causing you to see the great evil of sin, and to mourn for it, and hate it above all things, and giving you a sense of the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing you with all your hearts to cleave to him as your Savior, weaning your hearts from the world, and causing you to love

God above all, and to delight in holiness more than in all the pleasant things of this earth. And I must now leave you in a miserable condition, having no interest in Christ, and so under the awful displeasure and anger of God, and in danger of going down to the pit of eternal misery. — Now I must bid you farewell. I must leave you in the hands of God. I can do no more for you than to pray for you. Only I desire you not to forget, but often think of the counsels and warnings I have given you, and the endeavors I have used, that your souls might be saved from everlasting destruction.

Dear children, I leave you in an evil world, that is full of snares and temptations. God only knows what will become of you. This the Scripture has told us that there are but few saved, and we have abundant confirmation of it from what we see. This we see, that children die as well as others. Multitudes die before they grow up, and of those that grow up, comparatively few ever give good evidence of saving conversion to God. I pray God to pity you, and take care of you, and provide for you the best means for the good of your souls, and that God himself would undertake for you to be your heavenly Father, and the mighty Redeemer of your immortal souls. Do not neglect to pray for yourselves. Take heed you be not of the number of those who cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. Constantly pray to God in secret, and often remember that great day when you must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and meet your minister there, who has so often counseled and warned you.

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Christian Charity

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand

wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." -- Deuteronomy 15:7-11

SECTION I

The words explained.

Subject: 'Tis the most absolute and indispensable duty of a people of God to give bountifully and willingly for the supply of the wants of the needy.

THE duty here enjoined, is giving to the poor. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: — Thou shalt surely give him." Here by *thy poor brother* is to be understood the same as in other places is meant by *neighbor*. It is explained in Lev. 25:35 to mean not only those of their own nation, but even strangers and sojourners. "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a *stranger*, or *a sojourner*." The Pharisees indeed interpreted it to signify only one of their own nation. But Christ condemns this interpretation, Luke 10:29, etc. and teaches, in contradiction to their opinion, that the rules of charity, in the law of Moses, are to be extended to the Samaritans, who were not of their nation, and between whom and the Jews there was the most bitter enmity, and who were a people very troublesome to the Jews.

God gives us direction *how* we are to give in such a case, *viz. bountifully*, and *willingly*. We should give *bountifully*, and *sufficiently* for the supply

of the poor's need. Deu. 15:7, 8, "Thou shalt not shut up thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." And again, in verse 11, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Again, we should give *willingly* and *without grudging*. Deu. 15:7, "Thou shalt not harden thine heart from thy poor brother," And verse 10, "And thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him."

We may also observe how peremptorily this duty is here enjoined, and how much it is insisted on. It is repeated over and over again, and enjoined in the strongest terms. Deu. 15:7, "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother." Verse 8, "But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him." Verse 10, "Thou shalt surely give him." Verse 11, "I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy."

Moreover, God strictly warns against objections, Deu. 15:9, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." The matter concerning the seventh year, or year of release, was thus: God had given Israel a law, that every seventh year should be a year of release; that if any man had lent anything to any of his poor neighbors, if the latter had not been able to repay it before that year, the former should release it, and should not exact it of his neighbor, but give it to him. Therefore God warns the children of Israel against making of this an objection to helping their poor neighbors, that the year of release was near at hand, and it was not likely that they would be able to refund it again before that time, and then they should lose it wholly, because then they would be obliged to release it. God foresaw that the wickedness of their hearts would be very ready to make such an objection. But very strictly warns them against it, that they should not be the more backward to supply the wants of the needy for that, but should be willing to give him. "Thou shalt be willing to lend, expecting nothing again."

Men are exceedingly apt to make objections against such duties, which

God speaks of here as a manifestation of the wickedness of their hearts: "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," etc. The warning is very strict. God doth not only say, Beware that thou do not actually refuse to give him, but, Beware that thou have not one objecting thought against it, arising from a backwardness to liberality. God warns against the beginnings of uncharitableness in the heart, and against whatever tends to a forbearance to give. "And thou give him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." God warns them, from the guilt which they would be liable to bring upon themselves hereby.

We may observe here several *enforcements* of this duty. There is a reason of this duty implied in God's calling him that is needy, *our brother*: "Thou shalt not shut thine hand from thy poor *brother*." And Deu. 15:9, "Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor *brother*." And verse 11, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy *brother*." We are to look upon ourselves as related to all mankind, but especially to those who are of the visible people of God. We are to look upon them as brethren, and to treat them accordingly. We shall be base indeed, if we be not willing to help *a brother* in want. — Another enforcement of this duty is the promise of God, that for this thing he will bless us in all our works, and in all that we put our hands unto; a promise that we shall not lose, but gain by it (Deu. 15:10). — Another is, that we shall never want proper objects of our charity and bounty. Verse 11, "For the poor shall never cease out of thy land." This God saith to the Jewish church; and the like Christ saith to the Christian church, Mat. 26:11, "The poor ye have always with you." This is to cut off an excuse that uncharitable persons would be ready to make for not giving, that they could find nobody to give to, that they saw none who needed. God cuts off such an excuse, by telling us, that he would so order it in his providence, that his people everywhere, and in all ages, shall have occasion for the exercise of that virtue.

From this account the doctrine is obvious, that it is the absolute and indispensable duty of the people of God, to give bountifully and willingly for supplying the wants of the needy. — But more particularly,

I. It is the duty of the people of God to give *bountifully* for the aforesaid purpose. It is commanded once and again in the text, "Thou shalt open

thine hand wide unto thy poor brother." Merely to give something is not sufficient. It answers not the rule, nor comes up to the holy command of God. But we must open our hand wide. What we give, considering our neighbor's wants, and our ability, should be such as may be called a *liberal* gift. What is meant in the text by opening the hand wide, with respect to those that are able, is explained in Deu. 15:8, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his want, in that which he needeth." By lending here, as is evident by the two following verses, and as we have just now shown, is not only meant lending to receive again; [for] the word *lend* in Scripture is sometimes used for giving; as in Luke 6:35, "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again."

We are commanded, therefore, to give our poor neighbor what is sufficient for his need. There ought to be none suffered to live in pinching want, among a visible people of God, who are able, unless in case of idleness, or prodigality, or some such case which the Word of God excepts. — It is said that the children of Israel should lend to the poor, and in the year of release should release what they had lent, *save when there should be no poor among them*. It is rendered in the margin, *to the end there be no poor among you; i.e.* you should so supply the wants of the needy, that there may be none among you in pinching want. This translation seems the more likely to be the true one, because God says, Deu. 15:11, that there shall be no such time when there shall be no poor, who shall be proper objects of charity. — When persons give very *sparingly*, it is no manifestation of charity, but of a contrary spirit. 2 Cor. 9:5, "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

II. It is the duty of the visible people of God to give for the supply of the needy, *freely*, and without grudging. It doth not at all answer the rule in the sight of God, if it be done with an inward grudging, or if the heart be grieved, and it inwardly hurt the man to give what he gives. "Thou shalt surely give," says God, "and thine heart shall not be grieved." God looks at the heart, and the hand is not accepted without it. 2 Cor. 9:7, "Every man

according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

III. This is a duty to which God's people are under very strict *obligation*. It is not merely a commendable thing for a man to be kind and bountiful to the poor, but our bounden duty, as much a duty as it is to pray, or to attend public worship, or anything else whatever. And the neglect of it brings great guilt upon any person.

SECTION II

Of the obligation of Christians to perform the duty of charity to the poor.

THIS duty is absolutely commanded, and much insisted on, in the Word of God. Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more peremptory urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor? We have the same law in a positive manner laid down in Lev. 25:35, etc. "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee." And at the conclusion of verse 38, God enforces it with saying, *I am the Lord thy God.*

It is mentioned in Scripture, not only as a duty, but a great duty. Indeed it is generally acknowledged to be a duty, to be kind to the needy. But by many it seems not to be looked upon as a duty of great importance. However, it is mentioned in Scripture as one of the greater and more essential duties of religion. Mic. 6:8, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, *to love mercy*, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here *to love mercy* is mentioned as one of the three great things that are the sum of all religion. So it is mentioned by the apostle James, as one of the two things wherein pure and undefiled religion consists. Jam. 1:27, "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

So Christ tells us, it is one of the weightier matters of the law. Mat. 23:23, "Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." The Scriptures again and again teach us that it is a more weighty

and essential thing than the attendance on the outward ordinances of worship. Hos. 6:6, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;” Mat. 9:13 and 12:7. I know of scarce any duty which is so much insisted on, so pressed and urged upon us, both in the Old Testament and New, as this duty of charity to the poor.

The reason of the thing strongly obliges to it. It is not only very positively and frequently insisted on by God, but it most reasonable in itself. And so, on this account, there is reason why God should much insist upon it.

I. It is most reasonable, considering the general state and nature of mankind. This is such as renders it most reasonable that we should love our neighbor as ourselves; for men are made in the image of our God, and on this account are worthy of our love. Besides, we are all nearly allied one to another by nature. We have all the same nature, like faculties, like dispositions, like desires of good, like needs, like aversion to misery, and are made of one blood. And we are made to subsist by society and union one with another. Mankind in this respect are as the members of the natural body, one cannot subsist alone, without an union with and the help of the rest.

Now, this state of mankind shows how reasonable and suitable it is, that men should love their neighbors, and that we should not look everyone at his own things, but every man also at the things of others, Phil. 2:4. A selfish spirit is very unsuitable to the nature and state of mankind. He who is all for himself, and none for his neighbors, deserves to be cut off from the benefit of human society, and to be turned out among wild beasts, to subsist by himself as well as he can. A private niggardly spirit is more suitable for wolves, and other beasts of prey, than for human beings.

To love our neighbor as ourselves is the sum of the moral law respecting our fellow creatures. And to help them, and to contribute to their relief is the most natural expression of this love. It is vain to pretend to a spirit of love to our neighbors, when it is grievous to us to part with anything for their help, when under calamity. They who love only in word, and in tongue, and not in deed, have no love in truth. Any profession without it is a vain pretense. To refuse to give to the needy, is unreasonable, because

we therein do to others contrary to what we would have others to do to us in like circumstances. We are very sensible of our own calamities. And when we suffer, [we] are ready enough to think, that our state requires the compassion and help of others; and are ready enough to think it hard, if others will not deny themselves in order to help us when in straits.

II. It is especially reasonable, considering our circumstances, under such a dispensation of grace as that of the gospel. Consider how much God hath done for us, how greatly he hath loved us, what he hath given us, when we were so unworthy, and when he could have no addition to his happiness by us. Consider that silver, and gold, and earthly crowns, were in his esteem but mean things to give us, and he hath therefore given us his own Son. Christ loved and pitied us, when we were poor, and he laid out himself to help, and even did shed his own blood for us without grudging. He did not think much to deny himself, and to be at great cost for us vile wretches, in order to make us rich, and to clothe us with kingly robes, when we were naked; to feast us at his own table with dainties infinitely costly, when we were starving; to advance us from the dunghill, and set us among princes, and make us to inherit the throne of his glory, and so to give us the enjoyment of the greatest wealth and plenty to all eternity. Agreeably to 2 Cor. 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Considering all these things, what a poor business will it be, that those who hope to share these benefits, yet cannot give something for the relief of a poor neighbor without grudging! That it should grieve them to part with a small matter, to help a fellow servant in calamity, when Christ did not grudge to shed his own blood for them!

How unsuitable is it for us, who live only by kindness, to be unkind! What would have become of us, if Christ had been so saving of his blood, and loth to bestow it, as many men are of their money or goods? Or if he had been as ready to excuse himself from dying for us, as men commonly are to excuse themselves from charity to their neighbor? If Christ would have made objections of such things, as men commonly object to performing deeds of charity to their neighbor, he would have found enough of them.

Besides, Christ, by his redemption, has brought us into a more near

relations one to another, hath made us children of God, children in the same family. We are all brethren, having God for our common Father; which is much more than to be brethren in any other family. He hath made us all one body. Therefore we ought to be united, and subserve one another's good, and bear one another's burdens, as is the case with the members of the same natural body. If one of the members suffer, all the other members bear the burden with it, 1 Cor. 12:26. If one member be diseased or wounded, the other members of the body will minister to it, and help it. So surely it should be in the body of Christ. Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Apply these things to yourselves. And inquire whether you do not lie under guilt on account of the neglect of this duty, in withholding that charity which God requires of you towards the needy? You have often been put upon examining yourselves, whether you do not live in some way displeasing to God. Perhaps at such times it never came into your minds, whether you do not lie under guilt on this account. — But this neglect certainly brings guilt upon the soul in the sight of God, as is evident by the text. "Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee," Deu. 15:9. This is often mentioned as one of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem, for which God was about to bring such terrible judgments upon them. And it was one of the sins of Sodom, for which that city was destroyed, that she did not give to supply the poor and needy, Eze. 16:49, "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

And have we not reason to fear, that much guilt lies upon this land on this very account? We have a high conceit of ourselves for religion. But do not many other countries shame us? Do not the papists shame us in this respect? So far as I can understand the tenor of the Christian religion, and the rules of the Word of God, the same are in no measure in this respect answered by the general practice of most people in this land. There are many who make a high profession of religion. But do not many of them need to be informed by the apostle James, what true religion is?

Let everyone examine himself, whether he [does] not lie under guilt in

this matter. Have you not forborne to give when you have seen your brother in want? Have you not forborne to deny yourselves a little for his relief? Or when you have given, have you not done it grudgingly? And has it not inwardly hurt and grieved you? You have looked upon what you have given, as lost. So that what you have given, has been, as the apostle expresses it, a matter of covetousness, rather than of bounty. Have not occasions of giving been unwelcome to you? Have you not been uneasy under them? Have you not felt a considerable backwardness to give? Have you not, from a grudging, backward spirit, been apt to raise objections against giving, and to excuse yourselves? Such things as these bring guilt upon the soul, and often bring down the curse of God upon the persons in whom these things are found, as we may show more fully hereafter.

SECTION III

An exhortation to the duty of charity to the poor

WE are professors of Christianity, we pretend to be the followers of Jesus, and to make the gospel our rule. We have the Bible in our houses. Let us not behave ourselves in this particular, as if we had never see the Bible, as if we were ignorant of Christianity, and knew not what kind of religion it is. What will it signify to pretend to be Christians, and at the same time to live in the neglect of those rules of Christianity which are mainly insisted on in it? But there are several things which I would here propose to your consideration.

I. Consider that what you have is not your own; *i.e.* you have only a subordinate right. Your goods are only lent to you of God, to be improved by you in such ways as he directs. You yourselves are not your own. 1 Cor. 6:20, “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; your body and your spirit are God’s.” And if you yourselves are not your own, so then neither are your possessions your own. Many of you have by covenant given up yourselves and all you have to God. You have disowned and renounced any right in yourselves or in anything that you have, and have given to God all the absolute right. And if you be true Christians, you have done it from the heart.

Your money and your goods are not your own. They are only committed to you as stewards, to be used for him who committed them to you. 1 Pet. 4:9, 10, “Use hospitality one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” A steward has no business with his master’s goods, to use them any otherwise than for the benefit of his master and his family, or according to his master’s direction. He hath no business to use them, as if he were the proprietor of them. He hath nothing to do with them, only as he is to use them for his master. He is to give everyone of his master’s family their portion of meat in due season.

But if instead of that, he hoards up his master’s goods for himself, and withholds them from those of the household, so that some of the family are pinched for want of food and clothing. He is therein guilty of robbing his master and embezzling his substance. And would any householder endure such a steward? If he discovered him in such a practice, would he not take his goods out of his hands, and commit them to the care of some other steward, who should give everyone of his family his portion of meat in due season? Remember that all of us must give account of our stewardship, and how we have disposed of those goods which our Master has put into our hands. And if when our Master comes to reckon with us, it be found that we have denied some of his family their proper provision, while we have hoarded up for ourselves, as if we had been the proprietors of our Master’s goods, what account shall we give of this?

II. God tells us, that he shall look upon what is done in charity to our neighbors in want, as done unto him; and what is denied unto them, as denied unto him. Pro. 19:17, “He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord.” God hath been pleased to make our needy neighbors his receivers. He in his infinite mercy hath so interested himself in their case, that he looks upon what is given in charity to them, as given to himself. And when we deny them what their circumstances require of us, he looks upon it that we therein rob him of his right.

Christ teaches us, that we are to look upon our fellow Christians in this case as himself, and that our giving or withholding from them, shall be taken, as if we so behaved ourselves towards him; see Mat. 25:40. There Christ says to the righteous on his right hand, who had supplied the wants of the needy, “In that ye have done it to one of the least of these my

brethren, ye have done it unto me." In like manner he says to the wicked who had not shown mercy to the poor, verse 45, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." — Now what stronger enforcement of this duty can be conceived, or is possible, than this, that Jesus Christ looks upon our kind and bountiful, or unkind and uncharitable, treatment of our needy neighbors, as such a treatment of himself?

If Christ himself were upon earth, a dwelt among us in a frail body, as he once did, and were in calamitous and needy circumstances, should we not be willing to supply him? Should we be apt to excuse ourselves from helping him? Should we not be willing to supply him so, that he might live free from distressing poverty? And if we did otherwise, should we not bring great guilt upon ourselves? And might not our conduct justly be very highly resented by God? Christ was once here in a frail body, stood in need of the charity, and was maintained by it. Luke 8:2, 3, "And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalen, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." So he still, in many of his members, needs the charity of others.

III. Consider that there is an absolute necessity of our complying with the difficult duties of religion. To give to the poor in the manner and measure that the gospel prescribes is a difficult duty, *i.e.* it is very contrary to corrupt nature, to that covetousness and selfishness of which there is so much in the wicked heart of man. Man is naturally governed only by a principle of self-love. And it is a difficult thing to corrupt nature, for men to deny themselves of their present interest, trusting in God to make it up to them hereafter. — But how often hath Christ told us the necessity of doing difficult duties of religion, if we will be his disciples; that we must sell all, take up our cross daily, deny ourselves, renounce our worldly profits and interests, etc. And if this duty seem hard and difficult to you, let not that be an objection with you against doing it. For you have taken up quite a wrong notion of things if you expect to go to heaven without performing difficult duties; if you expect any other than to find the way to life a narrow way.

IV. The Scripture teaches us that this very particular duty is necessary, Particularly,

First, the Scripture teaches that God will deal with us as we deal with our fellow creatures in this particular, and that with what measure we mete to others in this respect, God will measure to us again. This the Scripture asserts both ways. It asserts that if we be of a merciful spirit, God will be merciful to us. Mat. 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Psa. 18:25, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful." On the other hand it tells us, that if we be not merciful, God will not be merciful to us; and that all our pretenses to faith and a work of conversion will not avail us, to obtain mercy, unless we be merciful to them that are in want. Jam. 2:13-16, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy. — What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Second, this very thing is often mentioned in Scripture as an essential part of the character of a godly man. Psa. 37:21, "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." And again, verse 26, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth." Psa. 112:5, "A good man showeth favour, and lendeth." And verse 9, "He hath dispersed, and given to the poor." So Pro. 14:31, "He that honoureth God, hath mercy on the poor." Again, Pro. 21:26 and Isa. 57:1. A *righteous* man and a *merciful* man are used as synonymous terms: "The *righteous* perisheth, and *merciful* men are taken away," etc.

It is mentioned in the New Testament as a thing so essential, that the contrary cannot consist with a *sincere* love to God. 1 John 3:17-19, "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So the apostle Paul, when he writes to the Corinthians, and proposes their contributing for the supply of the poor saints, tells them what he doth it for, *viz.* A trial of their

sincerity. See 2 Cor. 8:8, “I speak to prove the sincerity of your love.”

Third, Christ teaches that judgment will be past at the great day according to men’s works in this respect. This is taught us by Christ in the most particular account of the proceedings of that day, that we have in the whole Bible. See Mat. 25:34, etc. It is evident that Christ thus represented the proceedings and determinations of this great day, as turning upon this one point, on purpose, and on design to lead us into this notion, and to fix it in us, that a charitable spirit and practice towards our brethren is necessary to salvation.

V. Consider what abundant encouragement the Word of God gives, that you shall be no losers by your charity and bounty to them who are in want. As there is scarce any duty prescribed in the Word of God, which is so much insisted on as this; so there is scarce any to which there are so many promises of reward made. This virtue especially hath the promises of this life and that which is to come. If we believe the Scriptures, when a man charitably gives to his neighbor in want, the giver has the greatest advantage by it, even greater than the receiver. Acts 20:35, “I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” He that gives bountifully is a happier man than he that receives bountifully. Pro. 14:21, “He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.”

Many persons are ready to look upon what is bestowed for charitable uses as lost. But we ought not to look upon it as lost, because it benefits those whom we ought to love as ourselves. And not only so, but it is not lost *to us*, if we give any credit to the Scriptures. See the advice that *Solomon* gives in Ecc. 11:1, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.” By casting our bread upon the waters, Solomon means giving it to the poor, as appears by the next words, “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” Waters are sometimes put for people and multitudes.

What strange advice would this seem to many, to cast their bread upon the waters, which would seem to them like throwing it away! What more direct method to lose our bread, than to go and throw it into the sea? But

the wise man tells us, No, it is not lost; you shall find it again after many days. It is not sunk, but you commit it to Providence. You commit it to the winds and waves. However it will come about to you, and you shall find it again after many days. Though it should be many days first, yet you shall find it at last, at a time when you most need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. And God is not one of those who will not pay again what is lent to him. If you lend anything to God, you commit it into faithful hands. Pro. 19:17, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." God will not only pay you again, but he will pay you with great increase. Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given you," that is, in "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."

Men do not account that lost, that is let out to use. but what is bestowed in charity is lent to the Lord, and he repays with great increase. Isa. 32:8, "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." Here I would particularly observe,

First, that if you give with a spirit of true charity, you shall be rewarded in what is infinitely more valuable than what you give, even eternal riches in heaven. Mat. 10:42, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Giving to our needy brethren is in Scripture called laying up treasure in heaven, in bags that wax not old. Luke 12:33, "Sell what ye have and give alms, provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." Men, when they have laid up their money in their chests, do not suppose that they have thrown it away. But, on the contrary, that it is laid up safe. Much less is treasure thrown away, when it is laid up in heaven. What is laid up there is much safer than what is laid up in chests or cabinets.

You cannot lay up treasure on earth, but that it is liable to be stolen, or otherwise to fail. But there no thief approaches nor moth corrupts. It is committed to God's care, and he will keep it safely for you. And when you die, you shall receive it with infinite increase. Instead of a part of your

earthly substance thus bestowed, you shall receive heavenly riches, on which you may live in the greatest fullness, honor, and happiness, to all eternity; and shall never be in want of anything. After feeding with some of your bread those who cannot recompense you, you shall be rewarded at the resurrection, and eat bread in the kingdom of God. Luke 14:13-16, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Second, if you give to the needy though but in the exercise of moral virtue, you will be in the way greatly to gain by it in your temporal interest. They who give in the exercise of a *gracious* charity, are in the way to be gainers both here and hereafter; and those that give in the exercise of a *moral* bounty and liberality, have many temporal promises made to them. We learn by the Word of God, that they are in the way to be prospered in their outward affairs. Ordinarily such do not lose by it, but such a blessing attends their concerns, that they are paid doubly for it. Pro. 11:24, 25, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." And Pro. 28:27, "He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack."

When men give to the needy, they do as it were sow seed for a crop. When men sow their seed, they seem to throw it away. Yet they do not look upon it as thrown away because, though they expect not the same again, yet they expect much more as the fruit of it. And if it be not certain that they shall have a crop, yet they are willing to run the venture of it; for that is the ordinary way wherein men obtain increase. So it is when persons give to the poor. Though the promises of gaining thereby, in our outward circumstances, perhaps are not absolute; yet it is as much the ordinary consequence of it, as increase is of sowing seed. Giving to the poor is in this respect compared to sowing seed, in Ecc. 11:6, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." By withholding the hand, the wise man means not giving

to the poor (see verse 1, 2). It intimates, that giving to the poor is as likely a way to obtain prosperity and increase, as sowing seed in a field.

The husbandman doth not look upon his seed as lost, but is glad that he has opportunity to sow it. It grieves him not that he has land to be sown, but he rejoices in it. For the like reason we should not be grieved that we find needy people to bestow our charity upon. For this is as much an opportunity to obtain increase as the other.

Some may think this is strange doctrine; and it is to be feared, that not many will so far believe it as to give to the poor with as much cheerfulness as they sow their ground. However, it is the very doctrine of the Word of God, 2 Cor. 9:6, 7, 8, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

It is easy with God to make up to men what they give in charity. Many but little consider how their prosperity or ill success in their outward affairs depends upon Providence. There are a thousand turns of Providence, to which their affairs are liable, whereby God may either add to their outward substance, or diminish from it, a great deal more than they are ordinarily called to give to their neighbors. How easy is it with God to diminish what they possess by sickness in their families, by drought, or frost, or mildew, or vermin; by unfortunate accidents, by entanglements in their affairs, or disappointments in their business! And how easy is it with God to increase their substance, by suitable seasons, or by health and strength; by giving them fair opportunities for promoting their interest in their dealings with men; by conducting them in his providence, so that they attain their designs; and by innumerable other ways which might be mentioned! How often is it, that only one act of providence in a man's affairs either adds to his estate, or diminishes from it, more than he would need to give to the poor in a whole year.

God hath told us that this is the way to have his blessing attending our affairs. Thus, in the text, Deu. 15:10, "Thou shalt surely give him, and

thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and all that thou puttest thine hand unto." And Pro. 22:9, "He that hath a bountiful eye, shall be blessed." It is a remarkable evidence how little many men realize the things of religion, whatever they pretend; how little they realize that the Scripture is the Word of God, or if it be, that he speaks true; that notwithstanding all the promises made in the Scripture to bounty to the poor, yet they are so backward to this duty, and are so afraid to trust God with a little of their estates. Observation may confirm the same thing which the Word of God teaches on this head. God, in his providence, generally smiles upon and prospers those men who are of a liberal, charitable, bountiful spirit.

Sixth, God hath threatened to follow with his curse those who are uncharitable to the poor; as Pro. 28:27, "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse." It is said, *he that hideth his eyes,* because this is the way of uncharitable men. They hide their eyes from seeing the wants of their neighbor. A charitable person, whose heart disposes him to bounty and liberality, will be quick-sighted to discern the needs of others. They will not be at any difficulty to find out who is in want. They will see objects enough of their charity, let them go whither they will.

But, on the contrary, he that is of a niggardly spirit, so that it goes against the grain to give anything, he will be always at a loss for objects of his charity. Such men excuse themselves with this, that they find not anyone to give to. They hide their eyes, and will not see their neighbor's wants. If a particular object is presented, they will not very readily see his circumstances. They are a long while in being convinced that he is an object of charity. They hide their eyes. And it is not an easy thing to make them sensible of the necessities and distresses of their neighbor, or at least to convince them, that his necessities are such that they ought to give him any great matter.

Other men, who are of a bountiful spirit, can very easily see the objects of charity. But the uncharitable are very unapt both to see the proper objects of charity, and to see their obligations to this duty. The reason is, that they are of that sort spoken of here by the wise man, *they hide their eyes.*

Men will readily see, where they are *willing* to see. But where they hate to see, they will hide their eyes.

God says, such as hides his eyes in this case shall have many a curse. Such an one is in the way to be cursed in soul and body, in both his spiritual and temporal affairs. We have shown already, how those that are charitable to the poor are in the way of being blessed. There are so many promises of the divine blessing, that we may look upon it as much the way to be blessed in our outward concerns, as sowing seed in a field is the way to have increase. And to be close and uncharitable, is as much the way to be followed with a curse, as to be charitable is the way to be followed with a blessing. To withhold more than is meet, tends as much to poverty, as scattering tends to increase, Pro. 11:24. Therefore, if you withhold more than is meet, you will cross your own disposition, and will frustrate your own end. What you seek by withholding from your neighbor, is your own temporal interest and outward estate. But if you believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, you must believe that you cannot take a more direct course to lose, to be crossed and cursed in your temporal interest, than this of withholding from your indigent neighbor.

Seventh, consider that you know not what calamitous and necessitous circumstances you yourselves or your children may be in. Perhaps you are ready to bless yourselves in your hearts, as though there were no danger of you being brought into calamitous and distressing circumstances. There is at present no prospect of it; and you hope you shall be able to provide well for your children. But you little consider what a shifting, changing, uncertain world you live in, and how often it hath so happened, that men have been reduced from the greatest prosperity to the greatest adversity, and how often the children of the rich have been reduced to pinching want.

Agreeable to this is the advice that the wise man gives us, Ecc. 11:1, 2, “Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon earth.” Thou knowest not what calamitous circumstances thou mayest be in thyself, in this changeable uncertain world. You know not what circumstances you or your children may be brought into by captivity, or other unthought-of providences. Providence governs all

things. Perhaps you may trust to your own wisdom to continue your prosperity. But you cannot alter what God determines and orders in providence, as in the words immediately following the fore-mentioned text in Ecclesiastes, “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be;” *i.e.* you cannot alter the determinations of Providence. You may trust to your own wisdom for future prosperity. But if God have ordained adversity, it *shall come*. As the clouds when full of rain, empty themselves upon the earth, so what is in the womb of Providence shall surely come to pass. And as Providence casts the tree, whether towards the south, or towards the north, whether for prosperity or adversity, there it shall be, for all that you can do to alter it. Agreeably to what the wise man observes in Ecc. 7:13, “Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?”

This consideration, that you know not what calamity and necessity you may be in yourselves or your children, tends very powerfully to enforce this duty several ways.

1. This may put you upon considering how your hearts would be effected, if it should so be. If it should happen that you or some of your children should be brought into such circumstances as those of your neighbors, how grievous would it be to you! Now perhaps you say of this and the other poor neighbor, that they can do well enough. If they be pinched a little, they can live. Thus you can make light of their difficulties. But if Providence should so order it, that you or your children should be brought into the same circumstances, would you make light of them then? Would you not use another sort of language about it? Would you not think that your case was such as needed the kindness of your neighbors? Would you not think that they ought to be ready to help you? And would you not take it hardly, if you saw a contrary spirit in them, and saw that they made light of your difficulties?

If one of your children should be brought to poverty by captivity, *__1__* or otherwise, how would your hearts be affected in such a case? If you should hear that some persons had taken pity on your child, and had been very bountiful to it, would you not think that they did well? Would

you be at all apt to accuse them of folly or profuseness, that they should give so much to it?

2. If ever there should be such a time, your kindness to others now will be but a laying up against such a time. If you yourselves should be brought into calamity and necessity, then would you find what you have given in charity to others, lying ready in store for you. Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days, says the wise man. But when shall we find it? He tells us in the next verse; "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest now what evil shall be upon the earth." Then is the time when you shall find it, when the day of evil cometh. You shall again find your bread which you have cast upon the waters, when you shall want it most, and stand in greatest necessity of it. God will keep it for you against such a time. When other bread shall fail, then God will bring to you the bread which you formerly cast upon the waters, so that you shall not famish. He that giveth to the poor shall not lack.

Giving to the needy is like laying up against winter, or against a time of calamity. It is the best way of laying up for yourselves and for your children. Children in a time of need very often find their fathers' bread, that bread which their fathers had cast upon the waters. Psa. 37:25, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Why? What is the reason of it? It follows in the next verse, "He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed."

Whether the time will ever come or not, that we or our children shall be in distressing want of bread; yet doubtless evil will be on the earth. We shall have our times of calamity, wherein we shall stand in great need of God's pity and help, if not of that of our fellow creatures. And God hath promised that at such a time, he that hath been of a charitable spirit and practice, shall find help. Psa. 41:1-4, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Such as have been merciful and liberal to others in their

distress, God will not forget it, but will so order it, that they shall have help when they are in distress. Yea, their children shall reap the fruit of it in the day of trouble.

3. God hath threatened uncharitable persons, that if ever they come to be in calamity and distress they shall be left helpless. Pro. 21:13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and not be heard."

SECTION IV

Objections which are sometimes made to the exercise of charity, answered.

I PROCEED now to answer some OBJECTIONS which are sometimes made against this duty.

OBJECT. I. I am in a natural condition, and if I should give to the poor, I should not do it with a right spirit, and so should get nothing by it. — To this I answer,

First, we have shown already that a temporal blessing is promised to a moral bounty and liberality. This is the way to be prospered. This is the way to increase. We find in Scripture many promises of temporal blessings to moral virtues; as to diligence in our business, to justice in our dealings, to faithfulness, to temperance. So there are many blessings promised to bounty and liberality.

Second, you may as well make the same objection against any other duty of religion. You may as well object against keeping the Sabbath, against prayer, or public worship, or against doing anything at all in religion. For while in a natural condition, you do not any of these duties with a right spirit. If you say, you do these duties because God hath commanded or required them of you, and you shall sin greatly if you neglect them, you shall increase your guilt, and so expose yourselves to the greater damnation and punishment. The same may be said of the neglect of this duty; the neglect of it is as provoking to God.

If you say that you read, and pray, and attend public worship, because that is the appointed way for you to seek salvation, so is bounty to the poor, as much as those. — The appointed way for us to seek the favor of God and eternal life, is the way of the performance of all known duties, of which giving to the poor is one as much known, and as necessary, as reading the Scriptures, praying, or any other. Showing mercy to the poor does as much belong to the appointed way of seeking salvation, as any other duty whatever. Therefore this is the way in which Daniel directed Nebuchadnezzar to seek mercy, in Dan. 4:27, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by *showing mercy to the poor*."

OBJECT. II. If I be liberal and bountiful, I shall only make a righteousness of it, and so it will do me more hurt than good. To this I say,

First, the same answer may be made to this, as to the former objection, *viz.* that you may as well make the same objection against doing any religious or moral duty at all. If this be a sufficient objection against deeds of charity, then it is a sufficient objection to prayer. For nothing is more common than for persons to make a righteousness of their prayers. So it is a good objection against your keeping the Sabbath, or attending any public worship, or ever reading in the Bible. For of all these things you are in danger of making a righteousness. — Yea, of the objection be good against deeds of charity, then it is as good against acts of justice. And you may neglect to speak the truth, may neglect to pay your debts, may neglect acts of common humanity; for of all those things you are in danger of making a righteousness. So that if your objection be good, you may throw up all religion, and live like heathens or atheists, and may be thieves, robbers, fornicators, adulterers, murderers, and commit all the sins that you can think of, lest if you should do otherwise, you should make a righteousness of your conduct.

Second, your objection carries it thus, that it is not best for you to do as God commands and counsels you to do. We find many commands in Scripture to be charitable to the poor. The Bible is full of them; and you

are not excepted from those commands. God makes no exception of any particular kinds of persons that are especially in danger of making a righteousness of what they do. And God often directs and counsels persons to this duty. Now will you presume to say that God has not directed you to the best way? He has advised you to do thus, but you think it not best for you, but that it would do you more hurt than good, if you should do it. You think there is other counsel better than God's, and that it is the best way for you to go contrary to God's commands.

OBJECT. III. I have in times past given to the poor, but never found myself the better for it. I have heard ministers preach, that giving to the poor was the way to prosper. But I perceive not that I am more prosperous than I was before. — Yea, I have met with many misfortunes, crosses, and disappointments in my affairs since. And it may be that some will say, That very year, or soon after the very time, I had been giving to the poor, hoping to be blessed for it, I met with great losses, and things went hardly with me; and therefore I do not find what I hear preached about giving to the poor, as being the way to be blessed and prosperous, agreeable to my experience.

To this objection I shall answer several things:

First, perhaps you looked out for the fulfillment of the promise too soon, before you had fulfilled the condition. As particularly, perhaps you have been so sparing and grudging in your kindness to the poor, that what you have done has been rather a discovery of a covetous, niggardly spirit, than of any bounty or liberality. The promises are not made to every many who gives anything at all to the poor, let it be ever so little, and after what manner soever given. You mistook the promises, if you understood them so. A man may give something to the poor, and yet be entitled to no promise, either temporal or spiritual. The promises are made to *mercy* and *liberality*. But a man may give something, and yet be so niggardly and grudging in it, that what he gives may be, as the apostle calls it, a matter of covetousness. What he does may be more a manifestation of his covetousness and closeness, than anything else. But there are no promises made to men's expressing their covetousness.

Perhaps what you gave was not freely given, but as it were of necessity. It was grudgingly; your hearts were grieved when you gave. And if you gave once or twice what was considerable, yet that doth not answer the rule. It may be, for all that, that in the general course of your lives you have been far from being kind and liberal to your neighbors. Perhaps you thought that because you once or twice gave a few shillings to the poor, that then you stood entitled to the promises of being blessed in all your concerns, and of increasing and being established by liberal things, though in the general you have lived in a faulty neglect of the duty of charity. You raise objections from experience, before you have made trial. To give once, or twice, or thrice, is not to make trial, though you give considerably. You cannot make any trial unless you become a liberal person, or unless you become such that you may be truly said to be of a liberal and bountiful practice. Let one who is truly such, and has been such in the general course of his life, tell what he hath found by experience.

Second, if you have been liberal to the poor, and have met with calamities since, yet how can you tell how much greater calamities and losses you might have met with, if you had been otherwise? You say you have met with crosses, and disappointments, and frowns. If you expected to meet with no trouble in the world, because you gave to the poor, you mistook the matter. Though there be many and great promises made to the liberal, yet God hath no where promised, that they shall not find this world a world of trouble. It will be so to all. Man is born to sorrow, and must expect no other than to meet with sorrow here. But how can you tell how much greater sorrow you would have met with, if you had been close and unmerciful to the poor? How can you tell how much greater losses you would have met with? How much more vexation and trouble would have followed you? Have none ever met with greater frowns in their outward affairs, than you have?

Third, how can you tell what blessings God hath yet in reserve for you if you do but continue in well-doing? Although God hath promised great blessings to liberality to the poor, yet he hath not limited himself as to the time of the bestowment. If you have not yet seen any evident fruit of your kindness to the poor, yet the time may come when you shall see it remarkably, and that at a time when you most stand in need of it. You

cast your bread upon the waters, and looked for it, and expected to find it again presently. And sometimes it is so. But this is not promised. It is promised, "Thou shalt find it again *after many days*." God knows how to choose a time for you, better than you yourselves. You should therefore wait his time. If you go on in well-doing, God may bring it to you when you stand most in need.

It may be that there is some winter a-coming, some day of trouble. And God keeps your bread for you against that time. And then God will give you good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. We must trust in God's Word for the bestowment of the promised reward, whether we can see in what manner it is done or no. Pertinent to the present purpose are those words of the wise man in Ecc. 11:4, "He that observeth the winds shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." In this context the wise man in speaking of charity to the poor, and comparing it to sowing seed; and advises us to trust Providence for success in that, as we do in sowing seed. He that regardeth the winds and clouds, to prognosticate thence prosperity to seed, and will not trust Providence with it, is not like to sow, nor to have bread-corn. So he that will not trust Providence for the reward of his charity to the poor is [likely] to go without the blessing. After the words now quoted, follows his advice, Ecc. 11:6, "In the morning sow thy seed, and the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." — Therefore (Gal. 6:9) "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." You think you have not reaped yet. Whether you have or not, go on still in giving and doing good; and if you do so, you shall reap in due time. God only knows the due time, the best time, for you to reap.

OBJECT. IV. Some may object against charity to such or such particular persons, that they are not obliged to give them anything, for though they be needy, yet they are not in extremity. It is true they meet with difficulty, yet not so but that they can live, though they suffer some hardships. — But,

It doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve those only who are reduced to extremity, as might be abundantly shown. I shall at this time mention but two things as evidences of it.

First, we are commanded to love and treat one another as brethren. 1 Pet. 3:8, "Have compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful." Now is it the part of brethren to refuse to help one another, and to do anything for each other's comfort, and for the relief of each other's difficulties, only when they are in extremity? Doth it not become brothers and sisters to have a more friendly disposition one towards another, than this comes to? And to be ready to compassionate one another under difficulties, though they be not extreme?

The rule of the gospel is that when we see our brother under any difficulty or burden, we should be ready to bear the burden with him. Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." So we are commanded, "by love to serve one another," Gal. 5:13. The Christian spirit will make us apt to sympathize with our neighbor, when we see him under any difficulty. Rom. 12:15, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." When our neighbor is in difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have such a spirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction. And if we ought to be afflicted with him, then it will follow that we ought to be ready to relieve him. Because if we are afflicted with him, in relieving him, we relieve ourselves. His relief is so far our own relief, as his affliction is our affliction. Christianity teaches us to be afflicted in our neighbor's affliction. And nature teaches us to relieve ourselves when afflicted.

We should behave ourselves one towards another as brethren that are fellow travelers. For we are pilgrims and strangers here on earth, and are on a journey. Now, if brethren be on a journey together, and one meet with difficulty in the way, doth it not become the rest to help him, not only in the extremity of broken bones, or the like, but as to provision for the journey if his own fall short? It becomes his fellow travelers to afford him a supply out of their stores, and not to be over nice, exact, and fearful lest they give him too much: for it is but provision for a journey. And all are supplied when they get to their journey's end.

Second, that we should relieve our neighbor only when in extremity, is not agreeable to the rule of loving our neighbor as ourselves. That rule implies that our love towards our neighbor should work in the same manner, and express itself in the same ways, as our love towards ourselves. We are very sensible of our own difficulties. We should also be readily sensible of theirs. From love to ourselves, when we are under difficulties, and suffer hardships, we are concerned for our relief, are wont to seek relief, and lay ourselves out for it. — And as we would love our neighbor as ourselves, we ought in like manner to be concerned when our neighbor is under difficulty, and to seek his relief. We are wont to be much concerned about our own difficulties, though we be not reduced to extremity, and are willing in those cases to lay ourselves out for our own relief. So, as we would love our neighbor as ourselves, we should in like manner lay out ourselves to obtain relief for him, though his difficulties be not extreme.

OBJECT. V. Some may object against charity to a particular object because he is an ill sort of person. He deserves not that people should be kind to him. He is of a very ill temper, of an ungrateful spirit, and particularly, because he hath not deserved well of *them*, but has treated them ill, has been injurious to them, and even now entertains an ill spirit against them.

But we are obliged to relieve persons in want, notwithstanding these things, both by the general and particular rules of God's Word.

First, we are obliged to do so by the *general* rules of Scripture. I shall mention two.

1. That of loving our neighbor as ourselves. A man may be our *neighbor*, though he be an ill sort of man, and even our enemy, as Christ himself teaches us by his discourse with the lawyer, Luke 10:25, etc. A certain lawyer came to Christ, and asked him, what he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ asked him, how it was written in the law? He answers, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as

thyself." Christ tells him, that if he shall do thus, he shall live. But then the lawyer asks him, who is his neighbor? Because it was received doctrine among the Pharisees, that no man was their neighbor, but their friends, and those of the same people and religion. — Christ answers him by a parable, or story of a certain man, who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed from him, leaving him half dead. Soon after there came a priest that way, who saw the poor man that had been thus cruelly treated by the thieves; but passed by without affording him any relief. The same as done by a Levite. — But a certain Samaritan coming that way, as soon as he saw the half-dead man, had compassion on him, took him up, bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn, and took care of him, paying the innkeeper money for his past and future expense. And promising him still more, if he should find it necessary to be at more expense on behalf of the man.

Then Christ asks the lawyer, which of these three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan was neighbor to the man that fell among the thieves. Christ proposed this in such a manner, that the lawyer could not help owning, that the Samaritan did well in relieving the Jew, that he did the duty of a neighbor to him. Now, there was an inveterate enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. They hated one another more than any other nation in the world. And the Samaritans were a people exceedingly troublesome to the Jews. Yet we see that Christ teaches that the Jews ought to do the part of neighbors to the Samaritans; *i.e.* to love them as themselves. For it was that of which Christ was speaking.

And the consequence was plain. If the Samaritan was neighbor to the distressed Jew, then the Jews, by a parity of reason, were neighbors to the Samaritans. If the Samaritan did well, in relieving a Jew that was his enemy, then the Jews would do well in relieving the Samaritans, their enemies. — What I particularly observe is that Christ here plainly teaches that our enemies, those that abuse and injure us, are our neighbors, and therefore come under the rule of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

2. Another general rule that obliges us to the same thing is that wherein we are commanded to love one another, as Christ hath loved us. We have it John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one

another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Christ calls it a *new* commandment, with respect to that old commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves. This command of loving our neighbor as Christ hath loved us opens our duty to us in a new manner, and in a further degree than that did. We must not only love our neighbor as ourselves, but as Christ hath loved us. We have the same again, John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Now the meaning of this is not that we should love one another to the same *degree* that Christ loved us, though there ought to be a proportion, considering our nature and capacity, but that we should exercise our love one to another in like *manner*. As for instance, Christ hath loved us so as to be willing to deny himself, and to suffer greatly, in order to help us, so should we be willing to deny ourselves in order to help one another. Christ loved us and showed us great kindness though we were far below him so should we show kindness to those of our fellow men who are far below us. Christ denied himself to help us, though we are not able to recompense him, so should we be willing to lay out ourselves to help our neighbor, freely expecting nothing again. Christ loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were very evil and hateful, of an evil disposition, not deserving any good, but deserving only to be hated, and treated with indignation; so we should be willing to be kind to those who are of an ill disposition, and are very undeserving. Christ loved us, and laid himself out to relieve us, though we were his enemies, and had treated him ill. So we, as we would love one another as Christ hath loved us, should relieve those who are our enemies, hate us, have an ill spirit toward us, and have treated us ill.

Second, we are obliged to this duty by many *particular* rules. We are particularly required to be kind to the unthankful and to the evil. And therein to follow the example of our heavenly Father, who causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We are obliged, not only to be kind to them that are so to us, but to them that hate, and that despitefully use us. I need not mention the particular places which speak to the effect.

Not but that when persons are virtuous and pious, and of a grateful

disposition, and are friendly disposed towards us, they are more the objects of our charity for it, and our obligation to kindness to them is the greater. Yet if things be otherwise, that doth not render them not fit objects of our charity, nor set us free from obligation to kindness towards them.

OBJECT. VI. Some may object from their own circumstances that they have nothing to spare; they have not more than enough for themselves. — I answer,

First, it must doubtless be allowed that in some cases persons, by reason of their own circumstances, are not obliged to give to others. — For instance, if there be a contribution for the poor, they are not obliged to join in the contribution, who are in as much need as those are for whom the contribution is made. It savors of ridiculous vanity in them to contribute with others for such as are not more needy than they. It savors of a proud desire to conceal their own circumstances and an affectation of having them accounted about what they in truth are.

Second, there are scarcely any who may not make this objection, as they interpret it. There is no person who may not say, he has not more than enough for himself, as he may mean by *enough*. He may intend, that he has not more than he desires, or more than he can dispose of to his own advantage; or not so much, but that, if he had anything less, he should look upon himself in worse circumstances than he is in now. He will own, that he could live if he had less. But then he will say he could not live so well. Rich men may say they have not more than enough for themselves, as they may mean by it. They need it all, they may say, to support their honor and dignity, as is proper for the place and degree in which they stand. Those who are poor, to be sure, will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. Those who are of the middle sort will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. And the rich will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. Thus there will be none found to give to the poor.

Third. in many cases, we may, by the rules of the gospel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without suffering ourselves. As if our

neighbor's difficulties and necessities be much greater than our own, and we see that he is not like to be otherwise relieved, we should be willing to suffer with him, and to take part of his burden on ourselves. Else how is that rule of *bearing one another's burdens* fulfilled? If we be never obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor's burdens, when we bear no burden at all? Though we may not have a superfluity, yet we may be obliged to afford relief to others who are in much greater necessity. As appears by that rule, Luke 3:11, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." — Yea, they who are very poor may be obliged to give for the relief of others in much greater distress than they. If there be no other way of relief, those who have the lightest burden are obliged still to take some part of their neighbor's burden, to make it the more supportable. A brother may be obliged to help a brother in extremity, though they are both very much in want. The apostle commends the Macedonian Christians, that they were liberal to their brethren, though they themselves were in deep poverty. 2 Cor. 8:1, 2, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: how in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

Fourth, those who have not too much for themselves are willing to spare seed to sow, that they may have fruit hereafter. Perhaps they need that which they scatter in the field, and seem to throw away. They may need it for bread for their families. Yet they will spare seed to sow, that they may provide for the future, and may have increase. But we have already shown that giving to the poor is in Scripture compared to sowing seed, and is as much the way to increase as the sowing of seed is. It doth not tend to poverty, but the contrary. It is not the way to diminish our substance, but to increase it. All the difficulty in this matter is in trusting God with what we give, in trusting his promises. If men could but trust the faithfulness of God to his own promises, they would give freely.

OBJECT. VII. Some may object concerning a particular person that they do not certainly know whether he be an object of charity or not. They are

not perfectly acquainted with his circumstances. Neither do they know what sort of man he is. They know not whether he be in want as he pretends. Or if they know this, they know not how he came to be in want, whether it were not by his own idleness, or prodigality. Thus they argue that they cannot be obliged, till they certainly know these things. — I reply,

First, this is Nabal's objection, for which he is greatly condemned in Scripture; see 1 Sam. 25. David in his exiled state came and begged relief of Nabal. Nabal objected, 1 Sam. 25:10, 11, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" His objection was, that David was a stranger to him. He did not know who he was, nor what his circumstances were. He did not know but that he was a runaway. And he was not obliged to support and harbor a runaway. He objected, that he knew not that he was a proper object of charity; that he knew not but that he was very much the contrary.

But Abigail no way countenanced his behavior herein, but greatly condemned it. She calls him a man of Belial, and says that he was as his name was. Nabal was his name, and folly was with him. And her behavior was very contrary to his. And she is greatly commended for it. The Holy Ghost tells us in that chapter, 1 Sam. 25:3, that "she was a woman of a good understanding." At the same time God exceedingly frowned on Nabal's behavior on this occasion, as we are informed that about ten days after God smote Nabal that he died, verse 38.

This story is doubtless told us partly for this end, to discountenance too great a scrupulosity as to the object on whom we bestow our charity, and the making of this merely an objection against charity to others, that we do not certainly know their circumstances. It is true, when we have opportunity to be certainly acquainted with their circumstances, it is well to embrace it. And to be influenced in a measure by probability in such cases, is not to be condemned. Yet it is better to give to several that are not objects of charity, than to send away empty one that is.

Second, we are commanded to be kind to strangers whom we know not, nor their circumstances. This is commanded in many places. But I shall mention only one. Heb. 13:2, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” By strangers here the apostle means one whom we know not, and whose circumstances we know not; as is evident by these words, “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Those who entertained angels unawares, did not know the persons whom they entertained, nor their circumstances. Else how could it be unawares?

OBJECT. VIII. Some may say they are not obliged to give to the poor till they ask. If any man is in necessity, let him come and make known his straits to me, and then it will be time enough for me to give him. Or if he need a public contribution, let him come and ask. I do not know that the congregation or church is obliged to relieve till they ask relief. — I answer,

First, it surely is the most charitable to relieve the needy in that way wherein we shall do them the greatest kindness. Now it is certain that we shall do them a greater kindness by inquiring into their circumstances, and relieving them, without putting them upon begging. There is none of us but who, if it were their case, would look upon it more kind in our neighbors, to inquire into our circumstances, and help us of their own accord. To put our neighbors upon begging in order to relief, is painful. It is more charitable, more brotherly, more becoming Christians and the disciples of Jesus, to do it without. I think this is self-evident, and needs no proof.

Second, this is not agreeable to the character of the liberal man given in Scripture; *viz.* that devises liberal things. Isa. 32:8. It is not to devise liberal things, if we neglect all liberality till the poor come a begging to us. But to inquire who stand in need of our charity, and to contrive to relieve them in the way that shall do them the greatest kindness; that is to devise liberal things.

Third, we should not commend a man for doing so to his own brother. If a man had an own brother or sister in great straits, and he were well able

to supply them, under the pretense that if he or she want anything, let them come and ask and I will give them, we should hardly think such an one behaved like a brother. Christians are commanded to love as brethren, to look upon one another as brethren in Christ, and to treat one another as such.

Fourth, we should commend others for taking a method contrary to that which is proposed by the objector. If we should hear or read of a people who were so charitable, who took such care of the poor, and were so concerned that none among them should suffer, who were proper objects of charity; that they were wont diligently to inquire into the circumstances of their neighbors, to find out who were needy, and liberally supplied them of their own accord; I say, if we should hear or read of such a people, would it not appear well to us? Should not we have the better thought of that people, on that account?

OBJECT. IX. He has brought himself to want by his own fault. — In reply, it must be considered what you mean by his fault.

First, if you mean a want of a natural faculty to manage affairs to advantage, that is to be considered as his calamity. Such a faculty is a gift that God bestows on some, and not on others. And it is not owing to themselves. You ought to be thankful that God hath given you such a gift, which he hath denied to the person in question. And it will be a very suitable way for you to show your thankfulness, to help those to whom that gift is denied, and let them share the benefit of it with you. This is as reasonable as that he to whom Providence has imparted sight should be willing to help him to whom sight is denied, and that he should have the benefit of the sight of others, who has none of his own. Or, as that he to whom God hath given wisdom, should be willing that the ignorant should have the benefit of his knowledge.

Second, if they have been reduced to want by some oversight and are to be blamed that they did not consider for themselves better, yet that doth not free us from all obligation to charity towards them. If we should forever refuse to help men because of that, it would be for us to make

their inconsiderateness and imprudent act, an unpardonable crime, quite contrary to the rules of the gospel, which insist so much upon forgiveness. — We should not be disposed so highly to resent such an oversight in any for whom we have a dear affection, as our children, or our friends. We should not refuse to help them in that necessity and distress, which they brought upon themselves by their own inconsiderateness. But we ought to have a dear affection and concern for the welfare of all our fellow Christians, whom we should, love as brethren, and as Christ hath loved us.

Third, if they are come to want by a vicious idleness and prodigality, yet we are not thereby excused from all obligation to relieve them, unless they continue in those vices. If they continue not in those vices, the rules of the gospel direct us to forgive them. And if their fault be forgiven, then it will not remain to be a bar in the way of our charitably relieving them. If we do otherwise, we shall act in a manner very contrary to the rule of *loving one another as Christ hath loved us.* Now Christ hath loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from that want and misery which we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. We foolishly and perversely threw away those riches with which we were provided, upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity.

Fourth, if they continue in the same courses still, yet that doth not excuse us from charity to their families that are innocent. If we cannot relieve those of their families without their having something of it, yet that ought not to be a bar in the way of our charity. And that because it is supposed that those of their families are proper objects of charity. And those that are so, we are bound to relieve. The command is positive and absolute. If we look upon that which the heads of the families have of what we give, to be entirely lost; yet we had better lose something of our estate, than suffer those who are really proper objects of charity to remain without relief.

OBJECT. X. Some may object and say, Others do not their duty. If others did their duty, the poor would be sufficiently supplied. If others did as much as we in proportion to their ability and obligation, the poor would have enough to help them out of their straits. Or some may say, it belongs

to others more than it does to us. They have relations that ought to help them. Or there are others to whom it more properly belongs than to us.

ANS. We ought to relieve those who are in want though brought to it through others' fault. If our neighbor be poor, though others be to blame that it is so, yet that excuses us not from helping him. If it belong to others more than to us, yet if those others will neglect their duty, and our neighbor therefore remains in want, we may be obliged to relieve him. If a man be brought into straits through the injustice of others, suppose by thieves or robbers, as the poor Jew whom the Samaritan relieved; yet we may be obliged to relieve him, though it be not through our fault that he is in want, but through that of other men. And whether that fault be a commission or a neglect alters not the case.

As to the poor Jew that fell among thieves between Jerusalem and Jericho, it more properly belonged to those thieves who brought him into that distress to relieve him, than to any other person. Yet seeing they would not do it, others were not excused. And the Samaritan did no more than his duty, relieving him as he did, though it properly belonged to others. — Thus if a man have children or other relations, to whom it most properly belongs to relieve him, yet if they will not do it, the obligation to relieve him falls upon others. So for the same reason we should do the more for the relief of the poor, because others neglect to do their proportion, or what belongs to them. And that because by the neglect of others to do their proportion they need the more, their necessity is the greater.

OBJECT. XI. The law makes provision for the poor, and obliges the respective towns in which they live to provide for them. Therefore some argue that there is no occasion for particular persons to exercise any charity this way. They say, the case is not the same with us now as it was in the primitive church. For then Christians were under a heathen government. And however the charity of Christians in those times be much to be commended, yet now, by reason of our different circumstances, there is no occasion for private charity. Because, in the state in which Christians now are, provision is made for the poor

otherwise. — This objection is built upon these two suppositions, both which I suppose are false.

First, that the towns are obliged by law to relieve everyone who otherwise would be an object of charity. This I suppose to be false, unless it be supposed that none are proper objects of charity, but those that have no estate left to live upon, which is very unreasonable, and what I have already shown to be false, in answer to the fourth objection, in showing that it doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve only those who are reduced to extremity.

Nor do I suppose it was ever the design of the law, requiring the various towns to support their own poor, to cut off all occasion for Christian charity. Nor is it fit there should be such a law. It is fit that the law should make provision for those that have no estates of their own. It is not fit that persons who are reduced to that extremity should be left to so precarious a source of supply as a voluntary charity. They are in extreme necessity of relief, and therefore it is fit that there should be something sure for them to depend on. But a voluntary charity in this corrupt world is an uncertain thing. Therefore the wisdom of the legislature did not think fit to leave those who are so reduced upon such a precarious foundation for subsistence. But I suppose not that it was ever the design of the law to make such provision for all that are in want, as to leave no room for Christian charity.

Second, this objection is built upon another supposition which is equally false, *viz.* that there are in fact none who are proper objects of charity, but those that are relieved by the town. Let the design of the law be what it will, yet if there are in fact persons who are so in want, as to stand in need of our charity, then that law doth not free us from obligation to relieve them by our charity. For as we have just now shown, in answer to the last objection, if it more properly belong to others to relieve them than us; yet if they do it not, we are not free. So that if it be true, that it *belongs* to the town to relieve all who are proper objects of charity; yet if the town *in fact* do it not, we are not excused.

If one of our neighbors suffers through the fault of a particular person, of a thief or robber, or of a town, it alters not the case. But if he suffer and be

without relief, it is an act of Christian charity in us to relieve him. Now it is too obvious to be denied, that there are in fact persons so in want that it would be a charitable act in us to help them, notwithstanding all that is done by the town. A man must hide his mental eyes, to think otherwise.

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God Glorified in Man's Dependence

1 Corinthians 1:29-31

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

THOSE Christians to whom the apostle directed this epistle, dwelt in a part of the world where human wisdom was in great repute; as the apostle observes in the 22nd verse of this chapter, "The Greeks seek after wisdom." Corinth was not far from Athens, that had been for many ages the most famous seat of philosophy and learning in the world. The apostle therefore observes to them, how God by the gospel destroyed, and brought to nought, their wisdom. The learned Grecians, and their great philosophers, by all their wisdom did not know God, they were not able to find out the truth in divine things. But, after they had done their utmost to no effect, it pleased God at length to reveal himself by the gospel, which they accounted foolishness. He " chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are." And the apostle informs them in the text why he thus did, *That no flesh should glory in his presence*, etc.- In which words may be observed,

1. What God aims at in the disposition of things in the affair of redemption, viz. that man should not glory in himself, but alone in God; *That no flesh should glory in his presence, --that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

2. How this end is attained in the work of redemption, viz. by that absolute and immediate dependence which men have upon God in that work, for all their good. Inasmuch as,

First, All the good that they have is in and through Christ; He *is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* All the good of the fallen and redeemed creature is concerned in these four

things, and cannot be better distributed than into them; but Christ is each of them to us, and we have none of them any otherwise than in him. *He is made of God unto us wisdom*: in him are all the proper good and true excellency of the understanding. Wisdom was a thing that the Greeks admired; but Christ is the true light of the world; it is through him alone that true wisdom is imparted to the mind. It is in and by Christ that we have *righteousness*: it is by being in him that we are justified, have our sins pardoned, and are received as righteous into God's favour. It is by Christ that we have *sanctification*: we have in him true excellency of heart as well as of understanding; and he is made unto us inherent as well as imputed righteousness. It is by Christ that we have *redemption*, or the actual deliverance from all misery, and the bestowment of all happiness and glory. Thus we have all our good by Christ, who is God.

Secondly, Another instance wherein our dependence on God for all our good appears, is this, That it is God that has given us Christ, that we might have these benefits through him; he *of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness*, etc.

Thirdly, It is of him that we are in Christ Jesus, and come to have an interest in him, and so do receive those blessings which he is made unto us. It is God that gives us faith whereby we close with Christ.

So that in this verse is shown our dependence on each person in the Trinity for all our good. We are dependent on Christ the Son of God, as he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are dependent on the Father, who has given us Christ, and made him to be these things to us. We are dependent on the Holy Ghost, for it is *of him that we are in Christ Jesus*; it is the Spirit of God that gives faith in him, whereby we receive him,and close with him.

DOCTRINE.

"God is glorified in the work of redemption in this, that there appears in it so absolute and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him." -- Here I propose to show, *1st*, That there is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God for all their good. And, *2dly*, That God hereby is exalted and glorified in the work of redemption.

I. There is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on

God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: they are dependent on him for all, and are dependent on him every way.

The several ways wherein the dependence of one being may be upon another for its good, and wherein the redeemed of Jesus Christ depend on God for all their good, are these, viz. That they have all their good of him, and that they have all through him, and that they have all in him: That he is the cause and original whence all their good comes, therein it is *of* him; and that he is the *medium* by which it is obtained and conveyed, therein they have it *through* him; and that he is the good itself given and conveyed, therein it is *in* him. Now those that are redeemed by Jesus Christ do, in all these respects, very directly and entirely depend on God for their all.

First, The redeemed have all their good *of* God. God is the great *author* of it. He is the *first* cause of it; and not only so, but he is the *only* proper cause. It is of God that we have our Redeemer. It is God that has provided a Saviour for us. Jesus Christ is not only of God in his person, as he is the only-begotten Son of God, but he is from God, as we are concerned in him, and in his office of Mediator. He is the gift of God to us: God chose and anointed him, appointed him his work, and sent him into the world. And as it is God that *gives*, so it is God that *accepts* the Saviour. He gives the purchaser, and he affords the thing purchased.

It is of God that Christ becomes ours, that we are brought to him, and are united to him. It is of God that we receive faith to close with him, that we may have an interest in him. Eph. 2:8. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is of God that we actually receive all the benefits that Christ has purchased. It is God that pardons and justifies, and delivers from going down to hell; and into his favour the redeemed are received, when they are justified. So it is God that delivers from the dominion of sin, cleanses us from our filthiness, and changes us from our deformity. It is of God that the redeemed receive all their true excellency, wisdom, and holiness; and that two ways, viz. as the Holy Ghost by whom these things are immediately wrought is from God, proceeds from him, and is sent by him; and also as the Holy Ghost himself is God, by whose operation and indwelling the knowledge of God and divine things, a holy disposition and all grace, are

conferred and upheld. And though means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls, yet it is of God that we have these means of grace, and it is he that makes them effectual. It is of God that we have the Holy Scriptures; they are his word. It is of God that we have ordinances, and their efficacy depends on the immediate influence of his Spirit. The ministers of the gospel are sent of God, and all their sufficiency is of him.-- 2 Cor. 4:7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Their success depends entirely and absolutely on the immediate blessing and influence of God.

1. The redeemed have all from the *grace* of God. It was of mere grace that God gave us his only-begotten Son. The grace is great in proportion to the excellency of what is given. The gift was infinitely precious, because it was of a person infinitely worthy, a person of infinite glory; and also because it was of a person infinitely near and dear to God. The grace is great in proportion to the benefit we have given us in him. The benefit is doubly infinite, in that in him we have deliverance from an infinite, because an eternal, misery, and do also receive eternal joy and glory. The grace in bestowing this gift is great in proportion to our unworthiness to whom it is given; instead of deserving such a gift, we merited infinitely ill of God's hands. The grace is great according to the manner of giving, or in proportion to the humiliation and expense of the method and means by which a way is made for our having the gift. He gave him to dwell amongst us; he gave him to us incarnate, or in our nature; and in the like though sinless infirmities. He gave him to us in a low and afflicted state; and not only so, but as slain, that he might be a feast for our souls.

The grace of God in bestowing this gift is most free. It was what God was under no obligation to bestow. He might have rejected fallen man, as he did the fallen angels. It was what we never did any thing to merit; it was given while we were yet enemies, and before we had so much as repented. It was from the love of God who saw no excellency in us to attract it; and it was without expectation of ever being requited for it. And it is from mere grace that the benefits of Christ are applied to such and such particular persons. Those that are called and sanctified are to attribute it alone to the good pleasure of God's goodness, by which they are distinguished. He is sovereign, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.

Man hath now a greater dependence on the grace of God than he had

before the fall. He depends on the free goodness of God for much more than he did then. Then he depended on God's goodness for conferring the reward of perfect obedience; for God was not obliged to promise and bestow that reward. But now we are dependent on the grace of God for much more; we stand in need of grace, not only to bestow glory upon us, but to deliver us from hell and eternal wrath. Under the first covenant we depended on God's goodness to give us the reward of righteousness; and so we do now; but we stand in need of God's free and sovereign grace to give us that righteousness; to pardon our sin, and release us from the guilt and infinite demerit of it.

And as we are dependent on the goodness of God for more now than under the first covenant, so we are dependent on a much greater, more free and wonderful goodness. We are now more dependent on God's arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure. We were in our first estate dependent on God for holiness. We had our original righteousness from him; but then holiness was not bestowed in such a way of sovereign good pleasure as it is now. Man was created holy, for it became God to create holy all his reasonable creatures. It would have been a disparagement to the holiness of God's nature, if he had made an intelligent creature unholy. But now when fallen man is made holy, it is from mere and arbitrary grace; God may for ever deny holiness to the fallen creature if he pleases, without any disparagement to any of his perfections.

And we are not only indeed more dependent on the grace of God, but our dependence is much more conspicuous, because our own insufficiency and helplessness in ourselves is much more apparent in our fallen and undone state, than it was before we were either sinful or miserable. We are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful,and utterly polluted,and afterward holy. So the production of the effect is sensible, and its derivation from God more obvious. If man was ever holy and always was so,it would not be so apparent, that he had not holiness necessarily,as an inseparable qualification of human nature. So we are more apparently dependent on free grace for the favour of God, for we are first justly the objects of his displeasure, and afterwards are received into favour. We are more apparently dependent on God for happiness, being first miserable, and afterwards happy. It is more apparently free and without merit in us, because we are actually without any kind of excellency to merit, if there could be any such thing as merit

in creature excellency. And we are not only without any true excellency, but are full of, and wholly defiled with, that which is infinitely odious. All our good is more apparently from God, because we are first naked and wholly with- out any good, and afterwards enriched with all good.

2. We receive all from the *power* of God. Man's redemption is often spoken of as a work of wonderful power as well as grace. The great power of God appears in bringing a sinner from his low state, from the depths of sin and misery, to such an exalted state of holiness and happiness. Eph. 1:19. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us- ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."----

We are dependent on God's power through every step of our redemption. We are dependent on the power of God to convert us, and give faith in Jesus Christ, and the new nature. It is a work of creation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17. "We are created in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:10. The fallen creature cannot attain to true holiness, but by being created again. Eph. 4:24. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is a raising from the dead. Colos. 2:12-13. "Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Yea, it is a more glorious work of power than mere creation, or raising a dead body to life, in that the effect attained is greater and more excellent. That holy and happy being, and spiritual life, which is produced in the work of conversion, is a far greater and more glorious effect, than mere being and life. And the state from whence the change is made -- a death in sin, a total corruption of nature, and depth of misery -- is far more remote from the state attained, than mere death or non-entity.

It is by God's power also that we are preserved in a state of grace. 1 Pet. 1:5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." As grace is at first from God, so it is continually from him, and is maintained by him, as much as light in the atmosphere is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawning, or sun-rising. -- Men are dependent on the power of God for every exercise of grace, and for carrying on that work in the heart, for subduing sin and corruption, increasing holy principles, and enabling to bring forth fruit in good works. Man is dependent on divine power in bringing grace to its perfection, m making the soul completely amiable in Christ's glorious likeness, and filling of it with a satisfying joy and blessedness; and for the raising of the body to life, and to such a

perfect state, that it shall be suitable for a habitation and organ for a soul so perfected and blessed. These are the most glorious effects of the power of God, that are seen in the series of God's acts with respect to the creatures.

Man was dependent on the power of God in his first estate, but he is more dependent on his power now; he needs God's power to do more things for him, and depends on a more wonderful exercise of his power. It was an effect of the power of God to make man holy at the first: but more remarkably so now, because there is a great deal of opposition and difficulty in the way. It is a more glorious effect of power to make that holy that was so depraved, and under the dominion of sin, than to confer holiness on that which before had nothing of the contrary. It is a more glorious work of power to rescue a soul out of the hands of the devil, and from the powers of darkness, and to bring it into a state of salvation, than to confer holiness where there was no prepossession or opposition. Luke 11:21-22. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." So it is a more glorious work of power to uphold a soul in a state of grace and holiness, and to carry it on till it is brought to glory, when there is so much sin remaining in the heart resisting, and Satan with all his might opposing, than it would have been to have kept man from falling at first, when Satan had nothing in man.-- Thus we have shown how the redeemed are dependent on God for all their good, as they have all of him.

Secondly, They are also dependent on God for all, as they have all *through* him. God is the medium of it, as well as the author and fountain of it. All we have, wisdom, the pardon of sin, deliverance from hell, acceptance into God's favour, grace and holiness, true comfort and happiness, eternal life and glory, is from God by a Mediator; and this Mediator is God; which Mediator we have an absolute dependence upon, as he through whom we receive all. So that here is another way wherein we have our dependence on God for all good. God not only gives us the Mediator, and accepts his mediation, and of his power and grace bestows the things purchased by the Mediator; but he the Mediator is God.

Our blessings are what we have by purchase; and the purchase is made of God, the blessings are purchased of him, and God gives the purchaser;

and not only so, but God is the purchaser. Yea God is both the purchaser and the price; for Christ, who is God, purchased these blessings for us, by offering up himself as the price of our salvation. He purchased eternal life by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. 7:27. "He offered up himself." And 9:26. "He hath appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Indeed it was the human nature that was offered; but it was the same person with the divine, and therefore was an infinite price.

As we thus have our good through God, we have a dependence on him in a respect that man in his first estate had not. Man was to have eternal life then through his own righteousness; so that he had partly a dependence upon what was in himself; for we have a dependence upon that through which we have our good, as well as that from which we have it; and though man's righteousness that he then depended on was indeed from God, yet it was his own, it was inherent in himself; so that his dependence was not so *immediately* on God. But now the righteousness that we are dependent on is not in ourselves, but in God. We are saved through the righteousness of Christ: He *is made unto us righteousness;* and therefore is prophesied of, Jer. 23:6, under that name, "the Lord our righteousness." In that the righteousness we are justified by is the righteousness of Christ, it is the righteousness of God. 2 Cor.5:21. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." --Thus in redemption we have not only all things of God, but by and through him, 1 Cor. 8:6. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Thirdly, The redeemed have all their good *in God*. We not only have it of him, and through him, but it consists in him; he is all our good.-- The good of the redeemed is either objective or inherent. By their objective good, I mean that extrinsic object, in the possession and enjoyment of which they are happy. Their inherent good is that excellency or pleasure which is in the soul itself. With respect to both of which the redeemed have all their good in God, or which is the same thing, God him- self is all their good.

1. The redeemed have all their *objective* good in God. God himself is the great good which they are brought to the posses- sion and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased. God is the inheritance of the saints; he is the portion of

their souls. God is their wealth and treasure, their food, their Life, their dwelling- place, their ornament and diadem, and their everlasting honour and glory. They have none in heaven but God; he is the great good which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world. The Lord God is the light of the heavenly Jerusalem; and is the "river of the water of life " that runs, and "the tree of life that grows, in the midst of the paradise of God." The glorious excellencies and beauty of God will be what will for ever entertain the minds of the saints, and the love of God will be their everlasting feast. The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things; they will enjoy the angels, and will enjoy one another; but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in any thing else whatsoever that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what shall be seen of God in them.

2. The redeemed have all their *inherent* good in God. Inherent good is twofold; it is either excellency or pleasure. These the redeemed not only derive from God, as caused by him, but have them in him. They have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency. God puts his own beauty, *i.e.* his beautiful likeness, upon their souls. They are made partakers of the divine nature, or moral image of God, 2 Pet. 1:4. They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness. Heb. 12:10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy, as the moon and planets are bright by the sun's light. The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him.

The saints have both their spiritual excellency and blessedness by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and his dwelling in them. They are not only caused by the Holy Ghost, but are in him as their principle. The Holy Spirit becoming an inhabitant, is a vital principle in the soul. He, acting in, upon, and with the soul, becomes a fountain of true holiness and joy, as a spring is of water, by the exertion and diffusion of itself. John 4:14. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Compared with chap. 7:38-39. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that

believe on him should receive." The sum of what Christ has purchased for us, is that spring of water spoken of in the former of those places, and those rivers of living water spoken of in the latter. And the sum of the blessings, which the redeemed shall receive in heaven, is that river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. 22:1. Which doubtless signifies the same with those rivers of living water, explained, John 7:38-39, which is elsewhere called the "river of God's pleasures." Herein consists the fulness of good, which the saints receive of Christ. It is by partaking of the Holy Spirit, that they have communion with Christ in his fulness. God hath given the Spirit, not by measure unto him; and they do receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. This is the sum of the saints' inheritance; and there- fore that little of the Holy Ghost which believers have in this world, is said to be the earnest of their inheritance, 2 Cor. 1:22. "Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." And chap. 5:5. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And Eph. 1:13-14. "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

The Holy Spirit and good things are spoken of in Scripture as the same; as if the Spirit of God communicated to the soul, comprised all good things, Matt. 7:11. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" In Luke it is, chap. 11:13. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This is the sum of the blessings that Christ died to procure, and the subject of gospel-promises. Gal. 3:13-14. "He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The Spirit of God is the great promise of the Father, Luke 24:49. "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you." The Spirit of God therefore is called "the Spirit of promise," Eph. 1:33. This promised thing Christ received, and had given into his hand, as soon as he had finished the work of our redemption, to bestow on all that he had redeemed; Acts 2:13. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye both see and hear." So that all the holiness and happiness of the redeemed is in God. It is in the communications, indwelling, and acting of the Spirit of God. Holiness and happiness is in the fruit, here and hereafter, because

God dwells in them, and they in God.
Thus God has given us the Redeemer, and it is by him that our good is purchased. So God is the Redeemer and the price; and he also is the good purchased. So that all that we have is of God, and through him, and in him. Rom. 11:36. "For of him, and through him, and to him, or in him, are all things." The same in the Greek that is here rendered *to him*, is rendered *in him*, 1 Cor. 8:6.
II. God is glorified in the work of redemption by this means, viz. By there being so great and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him.
1. Man hath so much the greater occasion and obligation to notice and acknowledge God's perfections and all-sufficiency. The greater the creature's dependence is on God's perfections, and the greater concern he has with them, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of them. So much the greater concern any one has with and dependence upon the power and grace of God, so much the greater occasion has he to take notice of that power and grace. So much the greater and more immediate dependence there is on the divine holiness, so much the greater occasion to take notice of and acknowledge that. So much the greater and more absolute dependence we have on the divine perfections, as belonging to the several persons of the Trinity, so much the greater occasion have we to observe and own the divine glory of each of them. That which we are most concerned with, is surely most in the way of our observation and notice; and this kind of concern with any thing, viz. dependence, does especially tend to command and oblige the attention and observation. Those things that we are not much dependent upon, it is easy to neglect; but we can scarce do any other than mind that which we have a great dependence on. By reason of our so great dependence on God, and his perfections, and in so many respects, he and his glory are the more directly set in our view, which way soever we turn our eyes.
We have the greater occasion to take notice of God's all-sufficiency, when all our sufficiency is thus every way of him. We have the more occasion to contemplate him as an infinite good, and as the fountain of all good. Such a dependence on God demonstrates his all-sufficiency. So much as the dependence of the creature is on God, so much the greater does the creature's emptiness in himself appear; and so much the greater the creature's emptiness, so much the greater must the fulness of the Being be who supplies him. Our having all *of* God, shows the fulness of his

power and grace; our having all *through* him, shows the fulness of his merit and worthiness; and our having all *in* him, demonstrates his fulness of beauty, love, and happiness. And the redeemed, by reason of the greatness of their dependence on God, have not only so much the greater occasion, but obligation to contemplate and acknowledge the glory and fulness of God. How unreasonable and ungrateful should we be, if we did not acknowledge that sufficiency and glory which we absolutely, immediately, and universally depend upon!

2. Hereby is demonstrated how great God's glory is considered comparatively, or as compared with the creature's. By the creature being thus wholly and universally dependent on God, it appears that the creature is nothing, and that God is all. Hereby it appears that God is infinitely above us; that God's strength, and wisdom, and holiness, are infinitely greater than ours. However great and glorious the creature apprehends God to be, yet if he be not sensible of the difference between God and him, so as to see that God's glory is great, compared with his own, he will not be disposed to give God the glory due to his name. If the creature in any respects sets himself upon a level with God, or exalts himself to any competition with him, however he may apprehend that great honour and profound respect may belong to God from those that are at a greater distance, he will not be so sensible of its being due from him. So much the more men exalt themselves, so much the less will they surely be disposed to exalt God. It is certainly what God aims at in the disposition of things in redemption, (if we allow the Scriptures to be a revelation of God's mind,) that God should appear full, and man in himself empty, that God should appear all, and man nothing. It is God's declared design that others should not "glory in his presence;" which implies that it is his design to advance his own comparative glory. So much the more man "glories in God's presence," so much the less glory is ascribed to God.

3. By its being thus ordered, that the creature should have so absolute and universal a dependence on God, provision is made that God should have our whole souls, and should be the object of our undivided respect. If we had our dependence partly on God, and partly on something else, man's respect would be divided to those different things on which he had dependence. Thus it would be if we depended on God only for a part of our good, and on ourselves, or some other being, for another part: or if

we had our good only from God, and through another that was not God, and in something else distinct from both, our hearts would be divided between the good itself, and him from whom, and him through whom, we received it. But now there is no occasion for this, God being not only he from or of whom we have all good, but also through whom, and is that good itself, that we have from him and through him. So that whatsoever there is to attract our respect, the tendency is still directly towards God; all unites in him as the centre.

USE.

1. We may here observe the marvellous wisdom of God, in the work of redemption. God hath made man's emptiness and misery, his low, lost, and ruined state, into which he sunk by the fall, an occasion of the greater advancement of his own glory, as in other ways, so particularly in this, that there is now much more universal and apparent dependence of man on God. Though God be pleased to lift man out of that dismal abyss of sin and woe into which he was fallen, and exceedingly to exalt him in excellency and honour, and to a high pitch of glory and blessedness, yet the creature hath nothing in any respect to glory of; all the glory evidently belongs to God, all is in a mere, and most absolute, and divine dependence on the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And each person of the Trinity is equally glorified in this work: there is an absolute dependence of the creature on every one for all: all is of the Father, all through the Son, and all in the Holy Ghost. Thus God appears in the work of redemption as all in all. It is fit that he who is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all and the only, in this work.
2. Hence those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependence on God, derogate from his glory, and thwart the design of our redemption. And such are those schemes that put the creature in God's stead, in any of the mentioned respects, that exalt man into the place of either Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, in any thing pertaining to our redemption. However they may allow of a dependence of the redeemed on God, yet they deny a dependence that is so absolute and universal. They own an entire

dependence of God for some things, but not for others; they own that we depend on God for the gift and acceptance of a Redeemer, but deny so absolute a dependence on him for the obtaining of an *interest* in the Redeemer. They own an absolute dependence on the Father for giving his Son, and on the Son for working out redemption, but not so entire a dependence on the Holy Ghost for *conversion*, and a being in Christ, and so coming to a title to his benefits. They own a dependence on God for means of grace, but not absolutely for the benefit and success of those means; a partial dependence on the power of God, for obtaining and exercising holiness, but not a mere dependence on the arbitrary and sovereign grace of God. They own a dependence on the free grace of God for a reception into his favour, so far that it is without any proper merit, but not as it is without being attracted, or moved with any excellency. They own a partial dependence on Christ, as he through whom we have life, as having purchased new terms of life, but still hold that the righteousness through which we have life is inherent in ourselves, as it was under the first covenant. Now whatever scheme is inconsistent with our *entire* dependence on God for all, and of having all of him, through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its lustre and glory.

3. Hence we may learn a reason why faith is that by which we come to have an interest in this redemption; for there is included in the nature of faith, a sensible acknowledgment of *absolute dependence* on God in this affair. It is very fit that it should be required of all, in order to their having the benefit of this redemption, that they should be sensible of, and acknowledge, their dependence on God for it. It is by this means that God hath contrived to glorify himself in redemption; and it is fit that he should at least have this glory of those that are the subjects of this redemption, and have the benefit of it.-- Faith is a sensibleness of what is real in the work of redemption; and the soul that believes doth entirely depend on God for all salvation, in its own sense and act. Faith abases men, and exalts God; it gives all the glory of redemption to him alone. It is necessary in order to saving faith, that man should be emptied of himself, be sensible that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Humility is a great ingredient of true faith: he that truly receives redemption, receives it as a little child, Mark 10:15. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he

shall not enter therein." It is the delight of a believing soul to abase itself and exalt God alone: that is the language of it, Psalm 115:1. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory."
4. Let us be exhorted to exalt God alone, and ascribe to him all the glory of redemption. Let us endeavour to obtain, and increase in, a sensibleness of our great dependence on God, to have our eye to him alone, to mortify a self-dependent and self-righteous disposition. Man is naturally exceeding prone to exalt himself, and depend on his own power or goodness; as though from himself he must expect happiness. He is prone to have respect to enjoyments alien from God and his Spirit, as those in which happiness is to be found.-- But this doctrine should teach us to exalt God *alone*; as by trust and reliance, so by praise. *Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord*. Hath any man ope that he is converted, and sanctified, and that his mind is endowed with true excellency and spiritual beauty? that his sins are forgiven, and he received into God's favour, and exalted to the honour and blessedness of being his child, and an heir of eternal life? let him give God all the glory; who alone makes him to differ from the worst of men in this world, or the most miserable of the damned in hell. Hath any man much comfort and strong hope of eternal life, let not his hope lift him up, but dispose him the more to abase himself, to reflect on his own exceeding unworthiness of such a favour,and to exalt God alone. Is any man eminent in holiness, and abundant in good works, let him take nothing of the glory of it to himself, but ascribe it to him whose "workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

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God the Best Portion of the Christian

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." -- **Psalm 73:25**

In this psalm, the psalmist (Asaph) relates the great difficulty which existed in his own mind, from the consideration of the wicked. He observes, verses 2 and 3, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." In the 4th and following verses, he informs us, what in the wicked was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were *prosperous*, and all things went well with them. He then observed their *behavior* in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such abuse, *continued* their prosperity. Then he tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, *viz.* by going into the *sanctuary*, verses 16, 17. And [he] proceeds to inform us what considerations they were which helped him, *viz.* — (1.) The consideration of the *miserable end* of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woeful end at last, verses 18-20. — (2). The consideration of the *blessed end* of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to a happy end at last, verses 21-24. — (3.) The consideration, that the godly have much *better portion* than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in the text and following verse. Though the wicked are in prosperity, [they] are not in trouble as other men. Yet the godly, though in affliction, are in a state infinitely better, because they have God for their portion. They need desire nothing else. He that hath God, hath all. Thus the psalmist professes the sense and apprehension which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In the verse immediately preceding, the psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are in this world, and also when they are taken to another. They are blessed in God in this world, in that he *guides them by his counsel.* And when he takes them out of it, they are still happy, in that then he *receives them to glory*. This probably led him, in the text, to declare that he desired *no other portion*, either in this world or in that to come, either in heaven or upon earth. — Whence we learn, *That it is the spirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth.*

I. A godly man prefers God before anything else *in heaven.*

First, he prefers God before anything else that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly set on what is to be had there. Heaven is his chosen country and inheritance. He hath respect to heaven, as a traveler, who is in a distant land, hath to his own country. The traveler can content himself to be in a strange land for a while, but his own native land is preferred by him to all others: Heb. 11:13, etc. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." — The respect which a godly person hath to heaven may be compared to the respect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's house. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he desires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home. Heaven is the true saint's Father's house: John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions." John 20:17, "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

Now, the main reason why the godly man hath his heart thus to heaven is because God is there; that is the palace of the Most High. It is the place where God is gloriously present, where his love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with him, see him as he is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy him perfectly. If God and Christ were not in heaven, he would not be so earnest in seeking it, nor would he take so much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderness, nor would the consideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be such a comfort to him under toils and afflictions. The martyrs would not undergo cruel sufferings, from their persecutors, with a cheerful prospect of going to heaven, did they not expect to be with Christ, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that cheerfulness forsake all their earthly possessions, and all their earthly friends, as many thousands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and banishment, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for a heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father. — The believer's heart is in heaven, because his treasure is there.

Second, a godly man prefers God before anything else that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing *actually* in heaven, which is in his esteem equal with God; but neither is there any of which he can conceive as *possible to be there*, which by him is esteemed and desired equally with God. Some suppose quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from those which the Scriptures teach us. The Mahometans, for instance, suppose that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of sensual delights and pleasures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned are to the lusts and carnal appetites of men the most agreeable that he could devise, and with them he flattered his followers. — But the true saint could not contrive one more agreeable to his inclination and desires, than such as is revealed in the Word of God; a heaven of enjoying the glorious God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. There he shall have all sin taken away, and shall be perfectly conformed to God, and shall spend an eternity in exalted exercises of love to him, and in the enjoyment of his love. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but only vast wealth, immense treasures of silver, and gold, great honor of such kind as men obtain in this world, and a fullness of the greatest sensual delights and pleasures; all these things would not make up for the want of God and Christ, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place. — The godly have been made sensible, as to all creature-enjoyments, that they cannot satisfy the soul; and therefore nothing will content them but God. Offer a saint what you will, [but] if you deny him God, he will esteem himself miserable. God is the center of his desires; and as long as you keep his soul from its proper center, it will not be at rest.

II.It is the temper of a godly man to prefer God before all other things *on the earth*.

First, the saint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he *hopes* hereafter, to anything in this world. He looketh not so much at the things which are seen and temporal, as at those which are unseen and eternal, 2 Cor. 4:18. It is but a little of God that the saint enjoys in this world. He hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifestations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promised to give him Himself hereafter in a full enjoyment. And these promises are

more precious to the saint, than the most precious earthly jewels. The gospel contains greater treasures, in his esteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

Second, the saints prefer what of God may be *obtained* in this life before all things in the world. There is a great difference in the present spiritual attainments of the saints. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the highest attainments are very small in comparison with what is future. The saints are capable of making progress in spiritual attainments, and they earnestly desire such further attainments. Not contented with those degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their desire, to know more of God, to have more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Christ in their walk and conversation. Psa. 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psa. 42:1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psa. 63:1, 2, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." See also Psa. 84:1, 2, 3 and Psa. 130:6, "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Though every saint has not this longing desire after God to the same degree that the psalmist had, yet they are all of the same spirit. They earnestly desire to have more of his presence in their hearts. That this is the temper of the godly in general, and not of some particular saints only, appears from Isa. 26:8, 9, where not any particular saint, but the church in general speaks thus: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." See also Song 3:1, 2, 6, 8.

The saints are not always in the lively exercise of grace, but such a spirit they have, and sometimes they have the sensible exercise of it. They desire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things; and seek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They desire the honor which is of God, more than that which is of men, John 5:44, and communion with him, more than any earthly pleasures. They are of the same spirit which the apostle expresses, Phil. 3:8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

Third, the saint prefers *what he hath already of God* before anything in this world. That which was infused into his heart at his conversion, it more precious to him than anything which the world can afford. The views which are sometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treasures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he stands to God, the union which there is between his soul and Jesus Christ, he values more than the greatest earthly dignity. That image of God which is enstamped on his soul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his esteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to shine in jewels of gold, and the most costly pearls, or to be admired for the greatest external beauty. He values the robe of Christ's righteousness, which he hath on his soul, more than the robes of princes. The spiritual pleasures and delights which he sometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleasures of sin. Psa. 84:10, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

A saint thus prefers God before all other things in this world — 1. As he prefers God before anything else that he *possesses* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. Psa. 16:5, 6, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, he chiefly sets his heart on his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the divine favor before any respect shown him by his fellow-creatures. Although

inadvertently, these have room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reserves the throne for God; Luke 14:26, “If man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect*. The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they *hope*, and after which they are seeking, than on what they *have* in present possession. But a godly man prefers God to anything which he has in prospect in this world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, be for a season carried away with some enjoyment. However, he will again come to himself. This is not the temper of the man; he is of another spirit.

3. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly enjoyments of which he *can conceive*. He not only prefers him to anything which he now possesses, but he sees nothing possessed by any of his fellow-creatures, so estimable. Could he have as much worldly prosperity as he would, could he have earthly things just to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, incomparably more. He prefers Christ to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION

First, hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. Though he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many, yea, of all his temporal enjoyments; yet God, whom he prefers before all, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays in this changeable, troublesome world, he is happy; because his chosen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And when he goes into another world, still he is happy, because that portion yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him. — Could worldly-minded men find out a way to secure to themselves those earthly enjoyments on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less

degree, were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are! Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

Second, let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them. None can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chooses God for his portion, and prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chooses and worships him as God. To respect him as God, is to respect him above all other things. And if any man respect Him as *his* God, *his God he is*. There is an union and covenant relation between that man and the true God. — Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is. If the true God be he to whom he hath a supreme respect, whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a servant of the true God. But if the man have something else to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you, — whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be a difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction. The ungodly may be deluded with false affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves, as to this matter, several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

1. What is it which *chiefly* makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire after heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him? that you may see God, and enjoy him there? Is this the consideration which keeps your hearts, and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

2. If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you choose to live *always* in this world, without God, rather than in his time to leave the world, in order to be with him? If you might live here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence of God and communion with him — having no spiritual intercourse between him and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other for ever — would you choose this rather than to leave the world, in order to dwell in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

3. Do you prefer Christ to all others as the *way* to heaven? He who truly chooses God, prefers him in each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: the Father, as his Father; the Son as his Savior; the Holy Ghost, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you choose the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also whether you choose Jesus Christ before all others, as your way to heaven. And that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

4. If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a *strict walk* with God? They who prefer God as hath been represented, choose him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, not only when they come to the end of their journey, but also while they are in their pilgrimage. They choose the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labor, and care, and self-denial, rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

5. Were you to spend your eternity in this world, would you choose rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God,

than to live for ever in earthly prosperity without him? Would you rather spend it in holy living, and serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of his children? God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you! Would you rather choose these things, though in poverty, than to abound in worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the common wealth of Israel? Could you be content to stand in no child-like relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

(1) The feeling of some particular, strong, and lively *exercise* of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased sometimes to give such discoveries of his glory, and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt, that they feel such a spirit as Paul spoke of, when he said, “he counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;” and they can boldly say, as in the text, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” At such times the people of God do not need any help of ministers to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God. They plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God. — Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek that you may have such clear and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must labor to grow in grace. Though you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You

should therefore seek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

(2) The other way is to inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in *practice, i.e.* when you have occasion to manifest by your practice which you prefer — when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God — whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to those earthly things to which your hearts are most wedded. Are your lives those of adherence to God, and of serving him in this manner?

He who sincerely prefers God to all other things in his heart, will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chooses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents, or those who act on choice. Therefore there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth. — Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. 1:5, etc. "And besides this, giving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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All True Grace in the Heart Tends to Holy Practice in the Life

"Charity . . . rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." -- ***1 Corinthians 13:6***

Having mentioned, in the two preceding verses, many of the good fruits of charity, and shown how it tends to an excellent behavior in many particulars, the apostle now sums up these and all other good tendencies of charity, in respect to active conduct, by saying, “It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” As if he had said, “I have mentioned many excellent things that charity has a tendency to, and shown how it is contrary to many evil things. But I need not go on to multiply particulars, for, in a word, charity is contrary to everything in the life and practice that is evil, and tends to everything that is good — it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

By “iniquity,” seems to be intended here everything that is sinful in the life and practice; and by “the truth,” everything that is good in the life, or all that is included in Christian and holy practice. The word *truth* is, indeed, variously used in the Bible. Sometimes it means the true doctrines of religion; sometimes the knowledge of these doctrines; sometimes veracity or faithfulness; and sometimes it signifies all virtue and holiness, including both the knowledge and reception of all the great truths of the Scriptures, and conformity to these in the life and conduct. In this last sense the word is used by the apostle John, when he says, “I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth” (3 John 3). Taking the word in this sense, and generalizing the proposition, we have, as suggested by the text, the doctrine,

THAT ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN GRACE IN THE HEART TENDS TO HOLY PRACTICE IN THE LIFE.

Negatively, the apostle declares that charity is opposed to all wickedness, or evil practice; and, *positively,* that it tends to all righteousness, or holy practice. And as the principle may be generalized and also as charity has been shown to be the sum of all true and saving grace, the doctrine that has been stated seems clearly contained in the word of the text, viz. the doctrine, that *all true Christian grace tends to holy practice*. If any have the notion of grace, that it is something put into the heart, there to be confined and dormant, and that its influence does not govern the man throughout *as an active being* — or if they suppose that the change made by grace, though it indeed betters the heart itself, yet has no tendency to a corresponding improvement of the outward life — they have a very wrong notion. And that this is so, I would endeavor to make plain, first, by some arguments in favor of the doctrine that has been stated; and, second, by showing its truth with respect to particular graces. And,

I. *I would state some arguments in support of the doctrine, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life*. And,

1. *Holy practice is the aim of that eternal election which is the first ground of the bestowment of all true* grace. — Holy practice is not the ground and reason of election, as is supposed by the Arminians, who imagine that God elects men to everlasting life upon a foresight of their good works; but it is the aim and end of election. God does not elect men because he foresees they will be holy, but that he may make them, and that they may be holy. Thus, in election, God ordained that men should walk in good works, as says the apostle, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). And again it is said, that the elect are chosen to this very end — "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). And so Christ tells his disciples, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Now God's eternal election is the first ground of the bestowment of saving grace. And some have such saving grace, and others do not have it, because some are from eternity

chosen of God, and others are not chosen. And seeing that holy practice is the scope and aim of that which is the first ground of the bestowment of grace, this same holy practice is doubtless the tendency of grace itself. Otherwise it would follow, that God makes use of a certain means to attain an end, which is not fitted to attain that end, and has no tendency to it. It is further true,

2. *That redemption, by which grace is purchased, is to the same end.* — The redemption made by Christ is the next ground of the bestowment of grace on all who possess it. Christ, by his merits, in the great things that he did and suffered in the world, has purchased grace and holiness for his own people — "For their sakes," he says, "I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). And Christ thus redeemed the elect, and purchased grace for them, to the end that they might walk in holy practice. He has reconciled them to God by his death, to save them from wicked works, that they might be holy and unblamable in their lives, says the apostle — "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:21, 22). When the angel appeared to Joseph, he told him that the child that should be born of Mary should be called Jesus, that is, Savior, because he should save his people from their sins (Mat. 1:21). And holiness of life is declared to be the end of redemption, when it is said of Christ, that he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). And so we are told that Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). And for this end, he is said to have offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God, that his blood might purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

The most remarkable type of the work of redemption by divine love in all the Old Testament history, was the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt. But the holy living of his people was the end God had in view in that redemption, as he often signified to Pharaoh, when from time to time he said to him by Moses and Aaron, "Let my people go, that they

may serve me." And we have a like expression concerning Christ's redemption in the New Testament, where it is said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,.... to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:68-75). All these things make it very plain that the end of redemption is, that we might be holy. Still further it is true,

3. *That effectual calling, or that saving conversion in which grace is commenced in the soul, is to the same end.* — God, by hisSpirit, and through his truth, calls, awakens, convicts, converts, and leads to the exercise of grace, all those who are made willing in the day of his power, to the end that they might exercise themselves in holy practice. "We are his workmanship," says the apostle, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). And the apostle tells the Christian Thessalonians, that God had not called them unto uncleanness, but unto holiness (1 Thes. 4:7). And again it is written, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15). It is also true,

4. *That spiritual knowledge and understanding which are the inward attendants of all true grace in the heart, tend to holy practice.* — A true knowledge of God and divine things is a practical knowledge. As to a mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, many wicked men have attained to great measures of it. Men may possess vast learning, and their learning may consist very much of their knowledge in divinity, and of the Bible, and of the things pertaining to religion, and they may be able to reason very strongly about the attributes of God and the doctrines of Christianity, and yet herein their knowledge fails of being a saving knowledge, that it is only speculative and not practical. He that has a right and saving acquaintance with divine things, sees the excellency of holiness, and of all the ways of holiness, for he sees the beauty and excellency of God, which consist in his holiness; and, for the same reason, he sees the hatefulness of sin, and of all the ways of sin. And if a man knows the hatefulness of the ways of sin, certainly this tends to his

avoiding these ways; and if he sees the loveliness of the ways of holiness, this tends to incline him to walk in them.

He that knows God, sees that he is worthy to be obeyed. Pharaoh did not see why he should obey God, because he did not know who he was, and therefore he says — "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exo. 5:2). This is signified to be the reason why wicked men work or practice iniquity, and carry themselves so wickedly, that they have no spiritual knowledge, as says the Psalmist — "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord" (Psa. 14:4). And when God would describe the true knowledge of himself to the people of Israel, he does it by this fruit of it, that it led to holy practice — "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord" (Jer. 22:16). And so the apostle John informs us that the keeping of Christ's commands is an infallible fruit of our knowing him; and he stigmatizes him as a gross hypocrite and liar who pretends that he knows Christ, and does not keep his commandments (1 John 2:3, 4). If a man has spiritual knowledge and understanding, it tends to make him to be of an excellent spirit. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit" (Pro. 17:27). And such an excellent spirit will lead to a corresponding behavior. And the same appears, also,

5. *From the more immediate consideration of the principle of grace itself, from which it will be seen that the tendency of all Christian grace is to practice.* — Andhere,

First, it appears that all true Christian grace tends to practice, because *the faculty which is the immediate seat of it is the faculty of the will, which is the faculty that commands all a man's actions and practice.* The immediate seat of grace is in the will or disposition. And this shows that all true grace tends to practice; for there is not one of man's acts that can properly be said to belong to or to be any part of his practice, in any respect but that it is at the command of the will. When we speak of a man's practice, we have respect to those things that he does as a free and voluntary agent, or, which is the same thing, to those things that he does by an act of his will; so that the whole of a man's practice is directed by

the faculty of the will. All the executive powers of the man, whether of body or mind, are subject to the faculty of the will by the constitution of Him who hath made man, and who is the great author of our being. The will is the fountain of the practice, as truly as the head of a spring is the fountain of the stream that flows from it. And, therefore, if a principle of true grace be seated in this faculty, it must necessarily tend to practice; as much as the flowing of water in the fountain tends to its flowing in the stream.

Second, it is the definition of grace, *that it is a principle of holy action*. What is grace but a principle of holiness, or a holy principle in the heart? But the word "*principle*"is relative to something, of which it is a principle. And if grace be a principle, what is it a principle of, but of action? Principles and actions are correlates, that necessarily have respect one to the other. Thus, the very idea of a principle of life is a principle that acts in the life. And so, when we speak of a principle of understanding, we mean a principle whence flow acts of understanding. And so by a principle of sin is meant a principle whence flow acts of sin. And, in the same manner, when we speak of a principle of grace, we mean a principle whence flow acts of grace, or gracious actions. A principle of grace has as much a relation to practice as a root has to the plant that it is the root of. If there be a root, it is the root of something; either the root of something that actually grows from it, or that tends to bring forth some plant. It is absurd to speak of a root that is the root of nothing; and so it is absurd to speak of a principle of grace that does not tend to grace in the practice.

Third, one more thing, by which that which is real and substantial is distinguished from that which is only a shadow or appearance, is, *that it* is *effectual*. A shadow or picture of a man, though it be ever so distinct or well drawn, or give ever so lively a representation, and though it be the picture of a very strong man, or even of a mighty giant, can do nothing. There is nothing accomplished and brought to pass by it, because it is not real, but only a shadow or image. The substance, or reality, however, is something that is effectual. And so it is with what is in the heart of man. That which is only an appearance or image of grace, though it looks like grace, is not effectual, because it wants reality and substance. But that which is real and substantial is effectual, and does indeed bring

something to pass in the life. In other words, it acts itself out in practice. And so again,

Fourth, the nature of a principle of grace *is to be a principle of life, or a vital principle.* This we are everywhere taught in the Scriptures. There, natural men, who have no principle of grace in the heart, are represented as dead men, while those that have grace are represented as being alive, or having the principle of life in them. But it is the nature of a principle of life to be a principle of action and operation. A dead man does not act, or move, or bring anything to pass; but in living persons, the life appears by a continued course of action from day to day. They move, and walk, and work, and fill up their time with actions that are the fruits of life.

Fifth, true Christian grace is not only a principle of life, *but an exceedingly powerful principle.* Hence we read of "the power of godliness," as in 2 Tim. 3:5; and are taught that there is in it a divine power, such as was wrought in Christ when he was raised from the dead. But the more powerful any principle is, the more effectual it is to produce those operations and that practice to which it tends.

Having thus shown, in general, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life, I proceed, as was proposed,

II. *To show the same with respect to the particular Christian graces.* — Andhere, I remark, that this is the case,

1. *With respect to a true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* — This is one thing that very much distinguishes that faith which is saving from that which is only common. A true faith is a faith that works; whereas a false faith is a barren and inoperative faith. And therefore the apostle describes a saving faith as a "faith that worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). And the apostle James tells us, "A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" (Jam. 2:18). But more particularly,

First, the *conviction of the understanding and judgment,* which is implied in saving faith, *tends to holy practice.* He that has true faith is convinced of the reality and certainty of the great things of religion; and

he that is convinced of the reality of these things will be influenced by them, and they will govern his actions and behavior. If men are told of great things, which, if true, do most intimately concern them, and do not believe what they are told, they will not be much moved by them, nor will they alter their conduct for what they hear. But if they do really believe what they are told, and regard it as certain, they will be influenced by it in their actions, and in view of it will alter their conduct, and will do very differently from what they would if they had heard nothing. We see that this is so in all things of great concern that appear real to men. If a man hears important news that concerns himself, and we do not see that he alters at all for it in his practice, we at once conclude that he does not give heed to it as true; for we know the nature of man is such, that he will govern his actions by what he believes and is convinced of. And so if men are really convinced of the truth of the things they are told in the gospel, about an eternal world, and the everlasting salvation that Christ has purchased for all that will accept it, it will influence their practice. They will regulate their behavior according to such a belief, and will act in such a manner as will tend to their obtaining this eternal salvation. If men are convinced of the certain truth of the promises of the gospel, which promise eternal riches, and honors, and pleasures, and if they really believe that those are immensely more valuable than all the riches, and honors, and pleasures of the world, they will, for these, forsake the things of the world, and, if need be, sell all and follow Christ. If they are fully convinced of the truth of the promise, that Christ will indeed bestow all these things upon his people, and if all this appears real to them, it will have influence on their practice, and it will induce them to live accordingly. Their practice will be according to their convictions. The very nature of man forbids that it should be otherwise. If a man be promised by another that if he will part with one pound he will give him a thousand, and if he is fully convinced of the truth of this promise, he will readily part with the former in the assurance of obtaining the latter. And so he that is convinced of the sufficiency of Christ to deliver him from all evil, and to bring him to the possession of all good that he needs, will be influenced in his practice by the promise which offers him all this. Such a man, while he actually has such a conviction, will not be afraid to believe Christ in things wherein he otherwise would seem greatly to expose himself to calamity, for he is convinced that Christ is able to deliver him.

And so he will not be afraid to forego other ways of securing earthly happiness, because he is convinced that Christ alone is sufficient to bestow all needed happiness upon him. And so,

Second, that *act of the will,* which there is in saving faith, *tends to holy practice*. He that, by the act of his will, does truly accept of Christ as a Savior, accepts of him as a Savior from sin, and not merely as a Savior from the *punishment* of sin. But it is impossible that anyone should heartily receive Christ as a Savior from sin, and from the ways of sin, if he has not willed and does not aim, sincerely, in heart and life, to turn from all the ways of sin; for he that has not willed that sin and he should part, cannot have willed to receive Christ as his Savior to part them. And so he, again, that receives Christ by a living faith, closes with him as a Lord and King to rule over and reign in him, and not merely as a priest to make atonement for him. But to choose Christ, and close with him as a King, is the same as to yield in submission to his law, and in obedience to his authority and commands; and he that does this, lives a life of holy practice.

Third, all *the true trust in God,* that is implied in saving faith, *tends to holy practice*. And herein a true trust differs from all false trust. A trust in God in the way of negligence, is what in Scripture is called tempting God; and a trust in him in the way of sin, is what is called presumption, which is a thing terribly threatened in his Word. But he that truly and rightly trusts in God, trusts in him in the way of diligence and holiness; or, which is the same thing, in the way of holy practice. The very idea of our trusting in another, is, resting or living in acquiescence of mind and heart in the full persuasion of his sufficiency and faithfulness, so as to be ready fully to venture on him in our actions. But they that do not practice and act upon the persuasion of another's sufficiency and faithfulness, do not thus venture. They do not enter on any action or course of action in such a confidence, and so venture nothing, and therefore cannot be said truly to trust. He that really trusts in another, ventures on his confidence. And so it is with those that truly trust in God. They rest in the full persuasion that God is sufficient and faithful, so as to proceed in this confidence to follow God, and, if need be, to undergo difficulties and hardships for him, because he has promised that they shall be no losers by such a course;

and they have such confidence of this, that they can and do venture upon his promise, while those who are not willing thus to venture, show that they do not trust in him. They that have the full trust in God which is implied in a living faith, will not be afraid to trust God with their estates. It is so with respect to trust in men, that if those we have full confidence in desire to borrow anything of us, and promise to pay us again, and to pay us a hundred-fold, we are not afraid to venture, and do actually venture it. And so those that feel full confidence in God, are not afraid to lend to the Lord. And so, if we trust in God, we shall not be afraid to venture labor, and fighting, and watching, and suffering, and all things for him, since he has so abundantly promised to reward these things with that which will infinitely more than make up for all the losses or difficulties or sorrows we may experience in the way of duty. If our faith be saving, it will lead us thus actually to venture on God, in the fullest trust in his character and promises. And as faith, in itself, and in all that is implied in it, tends to holy practice, so the same is the case,

2. *With respect to all true love to God.* — Love is an active principle — a principle that we always find is active in things of this world. Love to our fellow creatures always influences us in our actions and practice. The whole world of mankind are chiefly kept in action from day to day, and from year to year, by love of some kind or another. He that loves money is influenced in his practice by that love, and kept by it in the continual pursuit of wealth. He that loves honor is governed in his practice by that love, and his actions through the whole of life are regulated by his desire for it. And how diligently do they that love carnal pleasures pursue after them in their practice! And so he that truly loves God is also influenced by that love in his practice. He constantly seeks after God in the course of his life: seeks his grace, and acceptance, and glory.

Reason teaches that a man's actions are the most proper test and evidence of his love. Thus, if a man professes a great deal of love and friendship to another, reason, in such a case, teaches all mankind that the most proper evidence of his being a real and hearty friend, as he professes to be, is his appearing a friend in his deeds, and not only in his words; and that he shall be willing, if need be, to deny himself for his friend, and to suffer in his own private interest for the sake of doing him a kindness.

If a man professes ever so much kindness or friendship, a wise man will not trust the profession, except as he sees the trial and proof of it in the behavior; unless in his actions he has found him a faithful and constant friend, ready to do and suffer for him. He will trust to such evidence of his love, more than he will to the greatest professions or even the most solemn oaths without it. And so, if we see a man who, by his constant behavior, shows himself ready to take pains and lay himself out for God, reason teaches, that in this he gives an evidence of love to God, more to be depended on than if he only professes that he feels great love to God in his heart. And so, if we see a man who, by what we behold of the course of his life, seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly lay himself out for Christ's honor and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, reason teaches, that he gives greater evidence of the sincerity and strength of his love to the Savior than if he only declares that he loves Him, and tells how his heart at such and such a time was drawn out in love to Him, while at the same time he is backward to do any great matter for Christ, or to put himself out of the way for the promotion of his kingdom, and is ready to excuse himself when called to active effort or self-denial for his Savior's sake.

There are various ways for the exercise of sincere love to God, and they all tend to holy practice. One is, in having a high esteem for God; for that which we love we have the highest esteem for, and naturally show this esteem in our behavior. Another way of showing our love to God is, in making *choice* of him above all other things; and if we do sincerely choose him above all other things, then we shall actually leave other things for him when it comes to the trial in our practice: and when, in the course of our life, it comes to pass that God and our honor, or God and our money, or God and our ease, are at the same time set before us, so that we must cleave to the one and forsake the other, then, if we really choose God above these other things, we shall in our practice cleave to God, and let these things go. Another way of the exercise of love to God is, in our *desires* after him; and these also tend to practice. He that really has earnest desires after God, will be stirred up actively to seek after him. He will apply himself to it as a business, just as men do for this world when they have earnest desires for a good which they believe is attainable. And still another way of the exercise of love to God is, in *delighting* in him,

and finding satisfaction and happiness in him.; and this also tends to practice. He that really and sincerely delights more in God than in other things, and finds his satisfaction in God, will not forsake God for other things; and thus, by his conduct, he shows that he indeed is satisfied in him as his portion. And so it is in all cases. If we have had enjoyment in any possession whatever, and then afterward forsake it for something else, this is an evidence that we were not fully satisfied with it, and that we did not delight in it above all other things. In all these cases, the feelings and choices will be seen in the practice.

3. *All true and saving repentance tends to holy practice.* — In the original of the New Testament, the word commonly rendered "repentance" signifies *a change of the mind;* and men are said to repent of sin when they change their minds with respect to it, so that, though formerly they esteemed and approved of it, they now utterly disapprove and dislike it. But such a change of the mind must and does tend to a corresponding change of the practice. We see it to be so universally in other things. If a man has heretofore been engaged in any pursuit or business whatever, and then changes his mind upon it, he will change his practice also, and will cease from that business or pursuit, or way of life, and turn his hand to some other. Sorrow for sin is one thing belonging to saving repentance. But sorrow for sin, if it be thorough and sincere, will tend, in practice, to the forsaking of sin. And so it is in everything. If a man has long gone on in any one way or manner of behavior, and afterwards is convinced of the foolishness and sinfulness of it, and is heartily sorry and grieved for it, the natural and necessary effect of this will be, that he will avoid it for the future. And if he goes on in it just as he did before, no one will believe that he is heartily sorry for having gone on in time past. Again,

4. *All true humility tends to holy practice.* — This is a grace abundantly recommended and insisted on in the Bible, and which is often spoken of as distinguishing a true Christian experience from that which is counterfeit. But this grace in the heart has a direct tendency to holy practice in the life. An humble heart tends to an humble behavior. He that is sensible of his own littleness, and nothingness, and exceeding unworthiness, will be disposed, by a sense of it, to carry himself

accordingly both before God and man. He that once was of a proud heart, and under the dominion of pride in his conduct, if afterward he has his heart changed to an humble heart, will necessarily have a corresponding change in his behavior. He will no longer appear in his demeanor as proud, and scornful, and ambitious as once he was, affecting as much as ever to appear above others, and striving as much after it, and as apt to condemn others, and to be dissatisfied or even enraged with those that seem to stand in the way of his earthly glory. For that which such a behavior in him arose from, before he was changed, was pride of heart; and, therefore, if now there be a great alteration with respect to this pride of heart, and it be mortified and banished from the soul, and humility implanted in its place, surely there will be an alteration, also, in the demeanor and practice; for humility of heart is a principle that has as strong a tendency to practice as pride of heart has; and therefore, if the latter be mortified, and the former take its place, then the proud practice that proceeded from the former will proportionably cease, and the humble practice which is the natural fruit of the latter will be manifest.

True Christian humility of heart tends also to make persons resigned to the will of God, and to lead them to be patient and submissive to his holy hand under the afflictions he may send, and to be filled with deep reverence toward the Deity, and to treat divine things with the highest respect. It leads also to a meek behavior toward men, making us condescending to inferiors, respectful to superiors, and toward all gentle, peaceful, easy to be entreated, not self-willed, not envious of others, but contented with our own condition, of a calm and quiet spirit, not disposed to resent injuries, but apt to forgive. And surely these are traits that belong to holy practice. And so again,

5. *All true fear of God tends to holy practice.* — The principal thing meant in the Scriptures by the fear of God, is a holy solicitude or dread lest we should offend God by sinning against him. Now, if a man do truly fear to offend God, and if he habitually dreads the thought of sinning against him, this will surely tend to his avoiding sin against him. That which men are afraid of they will shun. If a man professes that he is afraid and has a dread of a poisonous serpent, for example, but at the same time is seen to take no care to shun him, but is very bold to keep

near to him, who will believe his profession? Fearing God and observing to do all his commandments, are joined together as necessarily arising the one from the other, as in Deu. 28:58 — "If thou will not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God." And Joseph gives as a reason of his righteous and merciful conduct towards his brethren, that he feared God, as may be seen in Gen. 42:18. And in Pro. 8:13, it is said, that "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Job gives it as a reason why he avoided sin, that "destruction from God was a terror to him" (Job 31:23). And God himself, when he speaks of Job as "eschewing evil," mentions his fear of God as the ground and reason of it (Job 1:8). And in any person whatever, just so far as the fear of God reigns, just so far will it lead its possessor to avoid sin and to aim to be holy. Again,

6. *The spirit of thankfulness and praise tends to holy* practice. — Sincere thankfulness to God leads us to render again according to the benefits received. This we look upon as a sure evidence of true gratitude or thankfulness toward our fellowmen. If anyone does his neighbor any remarkable kindness, and he is really thankful for it, he will be ready, when an occasion offers, to do him a good in return. And though we cannot requite God's kindness to us by doing anything that shall be profitable to him, yet a spirit of thankfulness will dispose us to do what we can, which is well-pleasing or acceptable to him, or which may tend to his declarative glory. If one man should take pity on another who was in some great distress, or in danger of some terrible death, and, moved by this pity, should greatly lay himself out for his defense and deliverance, and should undergo great hardships and sufferings in order to it, and by these means should actually deliver him; and if the latter should express great thankfulness toward his deliverer, and yet in his actions and course of conduct should oppose and dishonor and cast contempt upon him, and do him great injury, no one would give much heed to all his professions of thankfulness. If he is truly thankful, he will never act thus wickedly toward his benefactor. And so no man can be truly thankful to God for the dying love of Christ, and for the infinite mercy and love of God toward himself, and yet lead a wicked life. His gratitude, if sincere, will lead him to be holy. The same is true, again,

7. *Of a Christian weanedness from the world, and of heavenly-mindedness, that they tend to holy practice.* — And I speak of the two together, for they are very much the same thing, expressed negatively and positively. Not to be weaned from the world, is the same thing as to be worldly-minded; and, on the other hand, to have a truly Christian weanedness from the world, is to be not worldly, but heavenly-minded. And this grace, like all the others mentioned, tends to holy practice. If the heart be taken off from the world, it will tend to take off the pursuits from the world; and if the heart be set on heavenly things, which are things not of the world, it will tend to lead us to pursue the things that are heavenly. He that has his heart loose from the world, will not practically keep the world close in his grasp, as being exceeding loath to part with any of it. If a man, speaking of his experience, tells how, at some given time, he felt his heart weaned from the world, so that the world seemed as nothing and vanity to him, and yet if in practice he seems as violent after the world as ever, and a great deal more earnest after it than he is after heavenly things, such as growth in grace, and in the knowledge of God, and in duty, then his profession will have but little weight in comparison with his practice. And so, if his conduct shows that he thinks more of treasure on earth than of treasure in heaven, and if; when he has got the world, or some part of it, he hugs it close, and appears exceedingly reluctant to let even a little of it go for pious and charitable uses, though God promises him a thousand-fold more in heaven for it, he gives not the least evidence of his being weaned from the world, or that he prefers heavenly things to the things of the world. Judging by his practice, there is sad reason to believe that his profession is in vain. The same is true, also,

8. *Of the spirit of Christian love to men, that this also tends to holy practice.* — If the spirit of love to man be sincere, it will tend to the practice and deeds of love. That is a hypocritical, and not a sincere love, that appears only in word and tongue, and not in deed; but that love which is sincere, and really a true love, will be manifest in the deeds, as says the apostle, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1 John 3:18, 19). No other love to brethren, except that which shows itself in deeds of love, will

profit any man. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?” (Jam. 2:15, 16.)

Experience shows, that those who cherish a sincere love toward others, are ready both to do and suffer for them. We are very ready to believe that parents love their own children, because this is natural; and such a love generally prevails throughout the world. But, incredible as it is that a man should not love his own children, yet, if there was a father that beheld his child in suffering circumstances, and would not put himself out of the way to relieve him, or that did not ordinarily treat his children with consideration and kindness, but acted from day to day as though he were utterly careless of their comfort, or as to what became of them, we should scarcely believe that he had anything of a father’s love in his heart. Love to our children will dispose us to loving deeds to our children. And so love to our neighbor will dispose us to all manner of good practice toward our neighbor. So the apostle declares, when, after summing up the several commandments of the second table of the law, he says, “And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and then adds, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:9, 10). Once more, and lastly, the same remark applies,

9. *To a true and gracious hope, that this also tends to holy practice.* — A false hope has a tendency just the reverse of this. It tends to licentiousness — to encourage men in their sinful desires and lusts, and to flatter and embolden them even when they are in the way of evil. But a true hope, so far from hardening men in sin, and making them careless of their duty, tends to stir them up to holiness of life, to awaken them to duty, and to make them more careful to avoid sin, and more diligent in serving God. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). A gracious hope has this tendency, from the nature of the happiness hoped for, which is a holy happiness; a happiness that the more a man seeks and hopes for, the more he is quickened and enlivened in the disposition to be holy. And it also has this tendency from the respect it has to the author of the happiness hoped for;

for it hopes for it from God, as the fruit of his undeserved and infinite mercy; and, therefore, by every motive of gratitude, the heart is engaged and stirred up to seek that which is well-pleasing to him. And it has the same tendency from a regard to the means by which it hopes to obtain this happiness; for a true hope looks forward to the obtaining of happiness in no other way but the way of the gospel, which is by a holy Savior, and in a way of cleaving to and following him. And it has, lastly, the same tendency by the influence of that which is the immediate source of all gracious hope, which is faith in Christ; and such faith always works, and works by love, and purifies the heart, and brings forth holy fruits in the life.

Thus it has been shown, first by general arguments, and then by an induction of particulars, wherein all the principal Christian graces have been mentioned, that all true grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life, just as truly as the root of the plant tends to growth in the plant itself, or as light has a tendency to shine, or the principle of life to manifest itself in the actions of the living person

In the application of the subject,

1. *We may see one main reason why Christian practice and good works are so abundantly insisted on in the Scriptures as an evidence of sincerity in grace.* — Christhas given it as a rule to us, that we are to judge men by their fruits (Mat. 7:16-20); and he insists on it, in a very emphatic manner, that the one that keeps his commandments is the one that truly loves him (John 14:21); and declares that the man that loves him will keep them, and the man that does not love him will not keep them (John 14:23, 24). Hence we may see the reason why the apostle Paul so much insisted on this point, declaring to those to whom he wrote, that if any pretended to belong to the kingdom of God, and yet did not keep God's commandments, they were either hypocrites or self-deceivers. His language is, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5, 6). "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor

idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. 8:13). And all this teaches us the reason why the same thing is so much insisted on by the apostle James, in various places with which you are familiar, and by the apostle John, more than almost any other subject. It is because God would have it deeply impressed on all, that good works are the only satisfying evidence that we are truly possessed of grace in the soul. It is by our practice that God judges us here on earth, and it is by our practice that he will judge us all at the great and final day.

2. *In view of this subject, let all examine themselves, whether their grace is real and* sincere. — Let everyone diligently and prayerfully ask whether their graces all tend to practice, and are seen from day to day in the life and conduct. But here even some truly godly persons may be ready to say, that if they judge themselves by their practice, they must condemn themselves, for they fail so much and so frequently, and are so often wandering out of the way, that at times it scarcely seems that they can be the children of God. But to such I answer, that persons who try themselves by their practice, may find that they greatly fail every day, and are often wandering out of the way, and yet they may really see no just cause in their practice to condemn themselves. For when we speak of a life of Christian practice, and when the Scriptures speak of the course of life as Christian, the meaning is not, that the life is a perfect and. sinless life; on the contrary, a Christian's life may be attended with many and exceeding great imperfections, and yet be a holy life, or a truly Christian life. It may be such a life as to clearly, and even necessarily show, that the grace which the individual has, is of the kind which has a tendency to holy practice. His fruits may be such as to be good evidence of the good nature of the tree, and his works such as to show his faith. And if you ask for still further light, then I would say, whatever your imperfections and failings may be, examine yourself whether you find the following evidences of your grace being of that kind which tends to holy practice.

First, has your supposed grace such influence *as to render those things in*

which you have failed of holy practice, loathsome, grievous, and humbling to you? Has it such influence in your mind as to render your past sinful practices hateful in your eyes, and has it led you to mourn before God for them? And does it render those things in your conduct that, since your supposed conversion, have been contrary to Christian practice, odious in your eyes? And is it the great burden of your life, that your practice is no better? Is it really grievous to you, that you have fallen, or do fall into sin? and are you ready, after the example of holy Job, to abhor yourself for it, and repent in dust and ashes? and, like Paul, to lament your wretchedness, and pray to be delivered from sin, as you would from a body of death?

Second, do you carry about with you, habitually, a dread of sin? Do you not only mourn, and humble yourself for sins that are past, but have you a dread of sin for the future? And do you dread it because in itself it is evil, and so hurtful to your own soul, and offensive to God? Do you dread it as a terrible enemy that you have often suffered by, and feel that it has been a grievous thing to you heretofore? And do you dread it as something that has hurt, and wounded, and stung you, so that you would see it no more? Do you stand on your watch against it, as a man would keep watch against something that he dreads, with such a dread as led Joseph to say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.)

Third, are you sensible of the beauty and pleasantness of the ways of holy practice? Do you see the beauty of holiness, and the loveliness of the ways of God and Christ? It is said in the text that "charity rejoiceth in the truth;" and it is given as the character of the truly godly, that "he rejoiceth and worketh righteousness," which is the same as saying that "he rejoices to work righteousness." And how often does the Psalmist speak of the law of God as being his delight, and of his love to the divine commandments!

Fourth, do you find that you do particularly esteem and delight in those practices that may, by way of eminence, be called Christian practices, in distinction from mere worldly morality? And by Christian practices are meant such as are implied in a meek, humble, prayerful, self-denying, self-renouncing, heavenly walk and behavior. Some of the heathen have been eminent for many of the moral virtues, and wrote excellently about

them, as, for example, of justice, and generosity, and fortitude, etc.; but they were far from a Christian poverty of spirit and lowliness of mind. They sought their own glory, and gloried exceedingly in their outward virtues, and seemed to know nothing of such a walk as the gospel commands, a walk of self-emptiness, and poverty of spirit, and self-distrust, and self-renunciation, and prayerful reliance on God. They were strangers to meekness, and did not allow, or even dream, that the forgiveness and love of enemies was a virtue. Such virtues as these are peculiarly Christian virtues, and Christian by way of distinction and eminence, and of these it is, that I ask, if you hold them in special esteem, for your Savior's sake, and because they are fraught with his spirit? If you are essentially distinguished and different in your spirit from the mere moralist, or the heathen sage or philosopher, you will have a spirit of special esteem for and delight in those virtues that do especially belong to the gospel.

Fifth, do you hunger and thirst after a holy practice? Do you long to live a holy life, to be conformed to God, to have your conduct, day by day, better regulated, and more spiritual, more to God's glory, and more such as becometh a Christian? Is this what you love, and pray for, and long for, and live for? This is mentioned by Christ, as belonging to the character of true Christians, that they "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Does this trait belong to you?

Sixth, do you make a business of endeavoring to live holily, and as God would have you, in all respects? Not only can you be said to endeavor after holiness, but do you make *a business* of endeavoring after it? Is it a matter that lies with weight upon your mind? A true and faithful Christian does not make holy living a mere incidental thing, but it is his great concern. As the business of the soldier is to fight, so the business of the Christian is to be like Christ, to be holy as he is holy. Christian practice is the great work that he is engaged in, just as the race was the great work of the racers. Is this so with you? And is it your great aim and love to keep *all* God's commandments, and so far as known to neglect none? "Then," says the Psalmist, "I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Is this your serious, constant, and prayerful aim, that you may be faithful in every known duty? And once

more,

Seventh, do you greatly desire that you may know all that is your duty? And do you desire to know it that you may do it? With the patriarch Job, canyou, and do you, pray to the Almighty, “That which I see not, teach thou me,” adding, as he added, to the great Searcher of hearts, “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more”?

If you can honestly meet these tests, then you have the evidence that your grace is of the kind that tends to holy practice, and to growth in it. And though you may fall, through God’s mercy you shall rise again. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. Though you may be at times faint, yet, if pursuing, you shall be borne on from strength to strength, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation

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All the Graces of Christianity Connected

"Charity . . . believes all things, hopes all things." -- ***1 Corinthians 13:7***

In these words, the apostle is commonly understood to mean, that charity disposes us to believe the best, and hope the best concerning our neighbors, in all cases. But it appears to me that this is not his meaning in this place; but rather that he intends to say, that charity is a grace which cherishes and promotes the exercise of all other graces, as, particularly, of the graces of faith and hope. Mentioning the graces of believing and hoping, or of faith and hope, the apostle here shows how the exercise of these is promoted by charity. My reasons for understanding the apostle in this sense, are the following: —

First, he had just before mentioned that fruit of charity whereby it leads us to think the best of our neighbors, in saying that it "*thinketh no evil*;" and we have no reason to think he would repeat the same thing over again in these words.

Second, it seems plain that the apostle had finished speaking of the fruits of charity toward our neighbors, when he summed them all up, as we have seen, in saying, that it "*rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*;" that is, that it tends to prevent all evil behavior, and to promote all good behavior. So that in this verse we might expect him to proceed to mention some fruits of charity of another kind, such, for example, as its tendency to promote the graces of faith and hope, which are such great graces of the gospel.

Third, we find that the apostle does, in this chapter, more than once mention the three graces of faith, hope, and charity, together. And it is but reasonable to suppose, that each time he does so, he means the same three graces. In the last verse of the chapter, we find these three mentioned and compared together; and there, by "faith" and "hope," the apostle plainly does not mean believing or hoping the best respecting our neighbors, but he does intend those great graces of the gospel that have God and Christ for their main and immediate object. And so when, in this place, he mentions the same three graces as in the last verse of the chapter, why should we not believe that he means the same three things in the former place as in the latter, since it is in the same chapter, and the same discourse, and in the course of the same argument? And again,

Fourth, this view is agreeable to the drift and aimof the apostle throughout the chapter, which is to show the relation of charity to the other graces, and particularly to faith and hope. This is what the apostle is aiming at in all that he says: and therefore, when he comes to the conclusion of the matter in the last verse, and says that, of faith, hope, and charity, the last is the greatest, he seems to have reference to what he had said in the words of the text, viz. that charity "believeth all things, and hopeth all things," meaning that charity is greater than the other two, as it has the most effectual influence in producing them, and is that by which they are cherished and promoted in the soul.

For these reasons, the doctrine I would draw from the text, is this:

THAT THE GRACES OF CHRISTIANITY ARE ALL CONNECTED TOGETHER, AND MUTUALLY DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER.

That is, they are all linked together, and united one to another and within another, as the links of a chain are; and one does, as it were, hang on another, from one end of the chain to the other, so that, if one link be broken, all fall to the ground, and the whole ceases to be of any effect. And in unfolding this thought, I would, first, briefly explain how the graces of Christianity are all connected, and then give some reasons why they are so. And I would,

I. *Briefly explain the manner in which the graces of Christianity are connected.* — And this may be shown in three things.

1. *All the graces of Christianity always go together.* — They so go together, that where there is one, there are all, and where one is wanting, all are wanting. Where there is faith, there are love, and hope, and humility; and where there is love, there is also trust; and where there is a holy trust in God, there is love to God; and where there is a gracious hope, there also is a holy fear of God. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him in those that hope in his mercy" (Psa. 147:11). Where there is love to God, there is a gracious love to man;and where there is a Christian love to man, there is love to God. Hence we find that the apostle John at one time gives love to the brethren as a sign of love to God, saying, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20); and then, again, speaks of love to God as a sign of love to the brethren, saying, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments" (1 John 5:2). It is also, true,

2. *That the graces of Christianity depend upon one another.* — There is not only a connection, whereby they are always joined together, but there is also a mutual dependence between them, so that one cannot be without the others. To deny one, would in effect be to deny another, and so all; just as to deny the cause would be to deny the effect, or to deny the effect would be to deny the cause. Faith promotes love, and love is the most

effectual ingredient in a living faith. Love is dependent on faith; for a being cannot be truly loved, and especially loved above all other beings, who is not looked upon as a real being. And then love, again, enlarges and promotes faith, because we are more apt to believe and give credit to, and more disposed to trust in, those we love, than in those we do not. So faith begets hope, for faith sees and trusts in God's sufficiency to bestow blessings, and in his faithfulness to his promises, that he will do what he has said. All gracious hope is hope resting on faith; and hope encourages and draws forth acts of faith. And so love tends to hope, for the spirit of love is the spirit of a child, and the more anyone feels in himself this spirit toward God, the more natural it will be to him to look to God, and go to God as his father. This childlike spirit casts out the spirit of bondage and fear, and gives the Spirit of adoption, which is the spirit of confidence and hope. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15); and the apostle John tells us "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). And so, again, a true and genuine hope tends greatly to promote love. When a Christian has most of a right hope of his interest in God's favor, and in those eternal blessings that are its fruits, this tends to draw forth the exercise of love, and oftentimes does draw it forth; as says the apostle Paul, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. 5:3-5).

Faith, too, promotes humility; for the more entirely anyone depends on God's sufficiency, the more will it tend to a low sense of his own sufficiency. And so humility tends to promote faith; for the more anyone has an humble sense of his own insufficiency, the more will his heart be disposed to trust only on God, and to depend entirely on Christ. So love promotes humility; for the more the heart is ravished with God's loveliness, the more will it abhor itself, and abase and humble itself for its own unloveliness and vileness. Humility promotes love; for the more anyone has an humble sense of his own unworthiness, the more will he admire God's goodness to him, and the more will his heart be drawn out in love to him for his glorious grace. Love tends to repentance; for he that truly repents of sin, repents of it because it is committed against a being

that he loves. And repentance tends to humility; for no one can be truly sorry for sin, and self-condemned in view of it, without being humbled in heart for it. So repentance, faith, and love, all tend to thankfulness. He that by faith trusts to Christ for salvation, will be thankful to him for salvation. He that loves God will be disposed thankfully to acknowledge his kindness. And he that repents of his sins will be disposed heartily to thank God for the grace that is sufficient to deliver him from their guilt and power. A true love to God tends to love to men who bear the image of God; and a spirit of love and peace toward men cherishes a spirit of love to God, as love to the image cherishes love to the original. And so it might be shown how all the graces depend one upon another, by mentioning many other particulars. Humility cherishes all other graces, and all other graces promote humility; and so faith promotes all other graces, and all other graces cherish and promote faith. And the like is true of everyone of the graces of the gospel.

3. *The different graces of Christianity are, in some respects, implied one in another.* — They are not only mutually connected and dependent, and each promotive of the others, but are in some respects implied in the nature of each other. In respect to several of them, it is true, that one is essential to another, or belongs to its very essence. Thus, for example, humility is implied in the nature of a true faith, so as to be of the essence of it. It is essential to a true faith, that it be an humble faith; and essential to a true trust, that it be an humble trust. And so humility belongs to the nature and essence of many other true graces. It is essential to Christian love, that it be an humble love; to submission, that it be an humble submission; to repentance, that it be an humble repentance; to thankfulness, that it be an humble thankfulness; and to reverence, that it be an humble reverence.

And so love is implied in a gracious faith. It is an ingredient in it, and belongs to its essence, and is, as it were, the very soul of it, or its working, operative nature. As the working, operative nature of man is his soul, so the working and operative nature of faith is love; for the apostle Paul tells us that “faith worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6); and the apostle James tells us, that faith, without its working nature, is dead, as the body is without the spirit (Jam. 2:26). And so faith is, in some respects, implied in love; for it

is essential to a true Christian love, that it be a believing love. So saving repentance and faith are implied in each other. They are both one and the same conversion of the soul from sin to God, through Christ. The act of the soul in turning from sin to God through Christ, as it respects the thing from which the turning is, viz. sin, is called repentance; and as it respects the thing to which, and the mediation by which it turns, it is called faith. But it is the same motion of the soul; just as, when a man turns, or flees from darkness to the light, it is the same act and motion, though it may be called. by different names, according as it respects the darkness fled from, or the light fled to; in the one case, being called avoiding, or turning from, and in the other, receiving or embracing.

And so there is love implied in thankfulness. True thankfulness is no other than the exercise of love to God on occasion of his goodness to us. So there is love in a true and childlike fear of God; for a childlike fear differs from a slavish, for a slavish fear has no love in it. And all these three graces of love, humility, and repentance, are implied in gracious childlike submission to the will of God. And so weanedness from the world, and heavenly-mindedness, do consist mainly in the three graces of faith, hope, and love. And so a Christian love to man is a kind of mediate or indirect love to Christ; and that justice and truth towards men, that are truly Christian graces, have love in them and essential to them. Love and humility, again, are the graces wherein consists meekness toward men. And so it is love to God, and faith, and humility, that are the ingredients of Christian patience and contentment with our condition, and with the allotments of providence toward us. Thus it appears that all the graces of Christianity are concatenated and linked together, so as to be mutually connected and mutually dependent. I proceed, then, as proposed,

II. *To give some reasons of their being thus connected and dependent.* — And,

1. *They are all from the same source.* — All the graces of Christianity are from the sameSpirit; as says the apostle, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;... diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Cor. 12:4-6). The graces of Christianity are all from the same Spirit of Christ sent forth into the heart, and dwelling there as a holy, and powerful, and divine nature; and therefore all graces

are only the different ways of acting on the part of the same divine nature; as there may be different reflections of the light of then, and yet all in origin the same kind of light, because it all comes from the same source or body of light. Grace in the soul is the Holy Spirit acting in the soul, and thus communicating his own holy nature. As it is with water in the fountain, so here it is all one and the same holy nature, only diversified by the variety of streams sent forth from it. These streams must all be of the same nature, seeing they all thus come from the same source; and the difference of many of them, whereby they have different names, is chiefly relative, and more from reference to their various objects and modes of exercise, than from a real difference in their abstract nature. So, also,

2. *They are all communicated in the same work of the Spirit, namely, in conversion.* — There is not one conversion of the soul to faith, and another conversion to love to God, and another to humility, and another to repentance, and still another to love to man; but all are produced by one and the same work of the Spirit, and are the result of one and the same conversion, or change of the heart. And this proves that all the graces are united and linked together, as being contained in that one and the same new nature that is given us in regeneration. It is here as it is in the first generation — that of the body, in which the several faculties are communicated in one and the same generation; the senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling, and so the powers of moving, breathing, etc., all being given at the same time, and all being but one human nature, and one human life, though diversified in its modes and forms. It is further true of the Christian graces,

3. *That they all have the same root and foundation, namely, the knowledge of God's excellence.* — The same sight or sense of God's excellency begets faith, and love, and repentance, and all the other graces. One sight of this excellence will beget all these graces, because it shows the ground and reason of all holy dispositions, and of all holy behavior toward God. They that truly know God's nature will love him, and trust in him, and have a spirit to submit to him, and serve, and obey him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Psa. 9:10). "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (1 John 3:6). "Every one

that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7). It is also true of the Christian graces,

4. *That they all have the same rule, namely, the law of God.* — And therefore they must be linked together; for, seeing they all have respect to this rule, they all tend to confirm the whole of the rule, and to conform the heart and life to it. He that has a true respect to one of God's commands, will have a true respect to all; for they are all established by the same authority, and are all jointly an expression of the same holy nature of God. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (Jam. 2:10, 11).

5. *All the Christian graces have the same end, namely, God.* — He is their end, for they all tend to him. As they are all from the same source, rising from the same fountain; and all stand on the same foundation, growing from the same root; and are all directed by the same rule, the law of God; — so they are all directed to the same end, namely, God, and his glory, and our happiness in him. And this shows that they must be nearly related, and very much linked together. And once more, it is true,

6. *That all the Christian graces are alike related to one and the same grace, namely, charity, or Divine love, as the sum of them all.* — As we have before seen, charity, or love, is the sum of all true Christian graces, however many names we may give them. And however different the modes of their exercise, or the ways of their manifestation, if we do but carefully examine them, we shall find they are all resolved into one. Love, or charity, is the fulfilling of them all, and they are but so many diversifications, and different branches, and relations, and modes of exercise, of the same thing. One grace does, in effect, contain them all, just as the one principle of life comprehends all its manifestations. And hence it is no wonder that they are always together, and are dependent on and implied in one another.

In the application of this subject,

1. *It may aid us to understand in what sense old things are said to be*

done away, and all things become new, in conversion. — This is what the apostle teaches us is the fact. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Now the doctrine of the text, and what has been said under it, may in some measure show us how this is; for by this we learn, that all the graces of Christianity are at once imparted in conversion, inasmuch as they are all linked together, so that, when one is bestowed, all are bestowed, and not a single one merely. A true convert, the moment he is converted, is possessed not of one or two, but of *all* holy principles, and all gracious dispositions. They may be feeble, indeed., like the faculties and powers of an infant child, but they are all truly there, and will be seen flowing out progressively in every kind of holy feeling and behavior toward both God and man. In every real convert there are as many graces as there were in Jesus Christ himself, which is what the evangelist John means, when he says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth;... and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:14-16). And, indeed, it cannot be otherwise, for all true converts are renewed in Christ's image, as says the apostle — "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). But that is no true image or picture of another, which has some parts or features wanting. An exact image has a part answerable to each part in that of which it is an image. The copy answers to the original throughout, in all its parts and features, though it may be obscure in some respects, and not represent any part perfectly, as grace answers to grace. Grace in the soul is a reflection of Christ's glory, as appears by 2 Cor. 3:18. It is a reflection of his glory, as the image of a man is reflected from a glass that exhibits part for part.

It is in the new birth as it is in the birth of the infant child. He has all the parts of a man, though they are as yet in a very imperfect state. Not a part is wanting, but there are as many members as to a man of full stature and strength. And therefore what is wrought in regeneration is called. "the new man;" not only new eyes or new ears, or new hands, but a new man, possessing all the human faculties and members. But all the graces of the Christian are new. All of them are members of the individual after conversion, and none of them were members before conversion. And

because there is, as it were, a new man, with all these members, begotten in conversion, therefore Christians are said to be sanctified wholly, in soul, body, and spirit, as in 1 Thes. 5:23. And so old things pass away, and all things become new, because, as the new man is put on, the old man is put off, so that the man in a sense becomes new all over.

And if there be all graces alive in this new man, it will follow that all corruptions are mortified; for there is no one corruption but what has a grace opposite to, or to answer it; and the bestowment of the grace mortifies the opposing corruption. Thus faith tends to mortify unbelief; love, to mortify enmity; humility, to mortify pride; meekness, to mortify revenge; thankfulness, to mortify a thankless spirit, etc. And as one of these takes its place in the heart, the opposite gives way, just as darkness in a room vanishes when a light is brought in. Thus old things pass away. All old things, in a measure, pass away, though none perfectly, on earth; and so all things become new, though also imperfectly. This shows that conversion, whenever and wherever it is wrought, is a great work and a great change. Though grace may be very imperfect, he must needs have a great change wrought in him who before had no corruption mortified, and now has all mortified; and who before had not one grace, and now has all graces. He may well be called a new creature, or, as in the original, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

2. *Hence, also, they that hope they have grace in their hearts may try one grace by another; for all graces go together.* — If persons think they have faith, and therefore think they have come to Christ, they should inquire whether their faith was accompanied with repentance; whether they came to Christ in a broken-hearted manner, sensible of their own utter unworthiness and vileness by sin; or whether they did not come in a presumptuous, Pharisaical spirit, taking encouragement from their own supposed goodness. They should try their faith, by inquiring whether it was accompanied with humility; whether or no they trusted in Christ in a lowly and humble manner, delighting to renounce themselves, and to give all the glory of their salvation to him. So they should try their faith by their love; and if their faith has in it only light, but no warmth, it has not the true light; neither is it genuine faith, if it does not work by love.

And so persons should examine their love by their faith. If they seem to

have an affectionate love toward God and Christ, they should inquire whether or no this be accompanied with a real conviction of soul of the reality of Christ, and of the truth of the gospel that reveals him, and with the full conviction that he is the Son of God — the only, and glorious, and all-sufficient Savior. Herein is one great difference between false affections and true ones, that the former are not accompanied with this conviction, and they do not withal see the truth and reality of divine things. And therefore such affections are very little to be depended on. They are very much like the affection which we may have towards a person we are reading of in a romance, and whom we at the same time suppose to be no other than a feigned person. Such affections as are not accompanied with conviction will never carry men very far in duty, or influence them to any great extent, either in doing or suffering.

So, again, persons should examine themselves as to that in them which seems to be the grace of hope. They should inquire whether their hope is accompanied. with faith, and arises from faith in Jesus Christ, and from a trust in his worthiness, and in his only. Is their hope built on this rock, or is it rather founded on a high opinion of something they think good in themselves? And so they should examine in what way their hope works, and what influence it has upon them, and whether or no it be accompanied. with humility. A true hope leads its possessor to see his own unworthiness, and, in view of his sins, to reflect on himself with shame and brokenness of heart. It lies in the dust before God, and the comfort that arises from it is a lowly, humble, joy and peace. On the contrary, a false hope is wont to lift its possessor up with a high conceit of himself and of his own experience and doings. We should also inquire whether our hope be accompanied with a spirit of obedience, and self-denial, and weanedness from the world. A true hope is accompanied with these other graces, linked. to, and dependent upon it, whereas a false hope is without them. It does not engage the heart in obedience, but flatters and hardens it in disobedience. It does not mortify carnal appetites, and wean from the world, but indulges the appetites and passions that are sinful, and chooses them, and makes men easy while living in them.

So, again, persons should examine their weanedness from the world, by

inquiring whether it be accompanied with such a principle of love as draws their hearts off from the things of the world to those spiritual and heavenly objects which a true divine love carries the soul out to, more than to the things of the world. They should not only ask if they have something that appears like a true love, but they should hear Christ asking of them, as he did of Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more than these*?" Herein a true weanedness from the world differs from a false weanedness. The latter is not from love to God and heavenly things, but commonly either from fear and distress of conscience, or perhaps from some outward affliction, whereby persons have their minds drawn off for a time from the world to something that they are constrained. to feel is better, though it is not really sweeter to them; and they are only drawn, or beaten, or torn off from the world, while their hearts would still cleave to it just as much as ever, if they could but enjoy it free from these terrors and afflictions. But they, on the other hand, that have a true weanedness from the world, are not wedded to worldly things even in their best and most inviting forms, because their hearts are drawn off by the love of something better. They are so in love with God, and with spiritual things, that their affections cannot fasten on the things of the world.

In the same way, persons should try their love to God by their love to the people of God; and also their love to their fellow-Christians by their love to God. False grace is like a defective or monstrous picture or image, wherein some essential part is wanting. There is, it may be, an appearance of some good disposition toward God, while at the same time there is a destitution of Christian dispositions toward men. Or if there appears to be a kind, just, generous, good-hearted disposition toward man, there is a want of right feeling toward God. On this account, we find God complains of Ephraim, that "he is a cake not turned" (Hos. 7:8); that is, that his goodness is partial and not consistent; that he is good in one thing and bad in another, like a cake not turned, which is generally burnt on one side and raw on the other, and good for nothing on either. Such a character we should studiously avoid, and endeavor that each grace that we have may testify to the genuineness of all our other graces, so that we may be proportioned Christians, growing in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto perfect men, unto the measure of

the stature of the fullness of Christ.

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True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils

***"Thou believes that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble."* -- James 2:19**

Subject: No such experiences as the devils in hell are the subjects of are any sure sign of grace.

Observe in these words, — 1. Something that some depended on, as an evidence of their good estate and acceptance, as the objects of God's favor, *viz.* a speculative faith, or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned probably because this was a doctrine wherein, especially, there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, amongst whom the Christians in those days were dispersed. And therefore, this was what many trusted in, as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of their interest in, the great spiritual and eternal privileges, in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith, *viz.* that it is a good attainment. "Thou dost well." It was good, as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and, in some respects, above all others fundamental. It was necessary to be believed, in order to salvation. To be without the belief of this doctrine, specially in those that had such advantage to know as they had to whom the apostle wrote, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, *viz.* that is any evidence of a

person's being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words. And it is particularly manifest by the conclusion of the verse, which is,

4. The thing observable in the words, *viz.* the argument by which the apostle proves that this is no sign of a state of grace, *viz.* that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God, and that he is a holy, sin-hating God and that he is a God of truth, and will fulfill his threatenings by which he has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them, and that he is an almighty God, and able to execute his threatened vengeance upon them.

Therefore, the doctrine I infer from the words to make the subject of my present discourse is this, *viz.* nothing in the mind of man that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.

If there be anything that the devils have, or find in themselves, which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good; which is plainly this: "That which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, thy believing that there is one God is no sure evidence that thou art gracious." So that the whole foundation of the apostle's argument lies in that proposition: "That which is in the devils, is no certain sign of grace." — Nevertheless, I shall mention two or three further reasons, or arguments of the truth of this doctrine.

I. The devils have no degree of holiness. And therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy. But when he fell, he lost all his holiness and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and in some sense the father of all sin. John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts

of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John 3:8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is often spoken of, by way of eminence, as "the wicked one." So, Mat. 13:19, "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Verse 38, "The tares are the children of the wicked one." 1 John 2:13, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Chap. 3:12, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." Chap. 5:18, "Whosoever is born of God — keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wickedness itself. Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of can have nothing of the nature of true holiness in them. The knowledge and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No impressions made on their hearts can be of a spiritual nature. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense. Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there be no holiness in them as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them as they are in man, unless something be added to them beyond what is in the devil. And if anything be added to them, then they are not the same things. But [they] are something beyond what devils are the subjects of, which is contrary to the supposition, for the proposition which I am upon is, that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection, or experience, or quality holy. But it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no

certain signs that persons which have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace, but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image that is his seal and mark, the stamp by which those that are his are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness, has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sing of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or flows from, or some way belongs to, its essence. For that which distinguishes things one from another is the essence, or something appertaining to their essence. And therefore, that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness or grace, can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

II. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine, that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holiness in them; yet, certainly they will allow, that the qualifications which are sure evidences of grace, must be things that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkable affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness, but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world who are wholly destitute of saving grace who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but nevertheless have something of that which is called moral virtue. And [they] are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general that live under the light of the gospel and are not given up to judicial blindness and hardness. Yea, those that are thus given up, yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world, without which the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned, or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws his restraining grace and all merciful influences of his Spirit whatsoever. They have neither saving grace nor common grace; neither the *grace* of the Spirit, nor any of the common *gifts* of the Spirit; neither true holiness,

nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than the damned, or have wicked men, when they leave this world, any principles of wickedness infused into them. But when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away his Spirit from them, as to all its merciful common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of his Spirit and good providence.

III. It is unreasonable to suppose that a person's being in any respect as the devil is, should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him, and hereafter shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really. They are so *relatively*. The devil is the grand rebel, the chief enemy of God and Christ, the object of God's greatest wrath, a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by him, forever shut out of his presence, the prisoner of his justice, an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, members of the family of the glorious King of heaven, the children of God, the brethren and spouse of his dear Son, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, kings and priests unto God. And they are extremely different *really*. The devil, on account of his hateful nature, and those accursed dispositions which reign in him, is called Satan, the adversary, Abaddon and Apollyon, the great destroyer, the wolf, the roaring lion, the great dragon, the old serpent. The saints are represented as God's holy ones, his anointed ones, the excellent of the earth, the meek of the earth, lambs and doves, Christ's little children, having the image of God, pure in heart, God's jewels, lilies in Christ's garden, plants of paradise, stars of heaven, temples of the living God. The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil, as heaven is from hell. And much more contrary than light is to darkness. And the eternal state that they are appointed to is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now it is not reasonable to suppose that being in any respect as Satan is, or being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections, or actions, that are in him, is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him, and in circumstances so diverse, and appointed to an eternal state so extremely contrary in all respects. Wicked men are in Scripture called the children of the devil. Now is it reasonable to suppose, that men's being in any respect as the devil is can be a certain sign that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed, that wicked men shall hereafter have their part with devils, shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels, and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with him, where he is, that he may behold and partake of his glory?

IMPROVEMENT

The *first* use may lie in several inferences, for our *instruction*.

I. From what has been said, it may be inferred, by parity of reason, that nothing that damned men *do*, or ever will *experience,* can be any sure sign of grace.

Damned men are like the devils, are conformed to them in nature and state. They have nothing better in them than the devils, have no higher principles in their hearts, experience nothing and do nothing of a more excellent kind, as they are the children and servants of the devil, and as such, shall dwell with him, and be partakers with him of the same misery. As Christ says, concerning the saints in their future state, Mat. 22:30,

“That they shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” So it may be said concerning ungodly men in their future state, that they shall be as the fallen wicked angels in hell.

Each of the aforementioned reasons, given to show the truth of the doctrine with respect to devils, holds good with respect to damned men. Damned men have no degree of holiness. And therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they have, cannot be holy experiences. Damned men are not only absolutely destitute of all true holiness, but they have not so much as any common grace. And lastly, it is unreasonable to suppose that a person’s being in any respect as the damned in hell are, should be a certain sign that they are very unlike and opposite to them, and hereafter shall not have their portion with them.

II. We may hence infer, that no degree of *speculative knowledge* of things of religion is any certain sign of saving grace. The devil, before his fall, was among those bright and glorious angels of heaven, which are represented as morning-stars and flames of fire that excel in strength and wisdom. And though he be now become sinful, yet his sin has not abolished the faculties of the angelic nature. As when man fell, he did not lose the faculties of the human nature. — Sin destroys spiritual principles, but not the natural faculties. It is true, sin, when in full dominion, entirely prevents the exercise of the natural faculties in holy and spiritual understanding, and lays many impediments in the way of their proper exercise in other respects. It lays the natural faculty of reason under great disadvantages by many and strong prejudices, and in fallen men the faculties of the soul are, doubtless, greatly impeded in their exercise, through that great weakness and disorder of the corporeal organ to which it is strictly united, and which is the consequence of sin. — But there seems to be nothing in the nature of sin, or moral corruption, that has any tendency to destroy the natural capacity, or even to diminish it, properly speaking. If sin were of such a nature as necessarily to have that tendency and effect, then it might be expected that wicked men, in a future state, where they are given up entirely to the unrestrained exercise of their corruptions and lusts, and sin is in all respects brought to its greatest perfection in them, would have the capacity of their souls greatly

diminished. This we have no reason to suppose, but rather on the contrary, that their capacities are greatly enlarged and that their actual knowledge is vastly increased. And that even with respect to the Divine Being, and the things of religion, and the great concerns of the immortal souls of men, the eyes of wicked men are opened, when they go into another world.

The greatness of the abilities of devils may be argued from the representation in Eph. 6:12. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers," etc. The same may also be argued from what the Scripture says of Satan's subtlety. Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3; Acts 13:10. And as the devil has a faculty of understanding of large capacity, so he is capable of a great speculative knowledge of the things of God, and the invisible and eternal world, as well as other things. And must needs actually have a great understanding of these things, as these have always been chiefly in his view, and as his circumstances, from his first existence, have been such as have tended chiefly to engage him to attend to these things. Before his fall, he was one of those angels who continually beheld the face of the Father in heaven. And sin has no tendency to destroy the memory, and therefore has no tendency to blot out of it any speculative knowledge that was formerly there.

As the devil's subtlety shows his great capacity, so the way in which his subtlety is exercised and manifested — which is principally in his artful management with respect to things of religion, his exceeding subtle representations, insinuations, reasonings, and temptations, concerning these things — demonstrates his great actual understanding of them. As, in order to be a very artful disputant in any science, though it be only to confound and deceive such as are conversant in it, a person had need to have a great and extensive acquaintance with the things which pertain to that science.

Thus the devil has undoubtedly a great degree of speculative knowledge in divinity, having been, as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe, *viz.* the heaven of heavens. He must needs have such an extensive and accurate knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of God, as we, worms of the dust, in our present state, are not capable of. And he must have a far more extensive knowledge of the works of God, as

of the work of creation in particular. For he was a spectator of the creation of this visible world. He was one of those morning-stars (Job 38:4-7), "who sang together, and of those sons of God, that shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched the line upon it." And so he must have a very great knowledge of God's works of providence. He has been a spectator of the series of these works from the beginning. He has seen how God has governed the world in all ages. And he has seen the whole train of God's wonderful successive dispensations of providence towards his church, from generation to generation. And he has not been an indifferent spectator. But the great opposition between God and him, in the whole course of those dispensations, has necessarily engaged his attention in the strictest observation of them. He must have a great degree of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ as the Savior of men, and the nature and method of the work of redemption, and the wonderful wisdom of God in this contrivance. It is that work of God wherein, above all others, God has acted in opposition to him, and in which he has chiefly set himself in opposition to God. It is with relation to this affair, that the mighty warfare has been maintained, which has been carried on between Michael and his angels, and the devil and his angels, through all ages from the beginning of the world, and especially since Christ appeared. The devil has had enough to engage his attention to the steps of divine wisdom in this work. For it is to that wisdom he has opposed his subtlety. And he has seen and found, to his great disappointment and unspeakable torment, how divine wisdom, as exercised in that work, has baffled and confounded his devices. He has a great knowledge of the things of another world. For the things of that world are in his immediate view. He has a great knowledge of heaven, for he has been an inhabitant of that world of glory. And he has a great knowledge of hell, and the nature of its misery. For he is the first inhabitant of hell. And above all the other inhabitants, has experience of its torments and has felt them constantly for more than fifty-seven hundred years. He must have a great knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, for it is evident he is not hindered from knowing what is written there, by the use he made of the words of Scripture in his temptation of our Savior. And if he can know, he has much opportunity to know, and must needs have a disposition to know, with the greatest exactness; that he may, to greater effect, pervert and wrest the Scripture,

and prevent such an effect of the Word of God on the hearts of men, as shall tend to overthrow his kingdom. He must have a great knowledge of the nature of mankind, their capacity, their dispositions, and the corruption's of their hearts. For he has had long and great observation and experience. The heart of man is what he had chiefly to do with, in his subtle devices, mighty efforts, restless and indefatigable operations and exertions of himself, from the beginning of the world. And it is evident that he has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion, by his being able to imitate it so artfully, and in such a manner as to transform himself into an angel of light.

Therefore it is manifest from my text and doctrine that no degree of speculative knowledge of religion is any certain sign of true piety. Whatever clear notions a man may have of the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of the two covenants, the economy of the persons of the Trinity, and the part which each person has in the affair of man's redemption, if he can discourse never so excellently of the offices of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the admirable methods of divine wisdom, and the harmony of the various attributes of God in that way; if he can talk never so clearly and exactly of the method of the justification of a sinner, and of the nature of conversion, and the operations of the Spirit of God, in applying the redemption of Christ, giving good distinctions, happily solving difficulties, and answering objections, in a manner tending greatly to enlighten the ignorant, to the edification of the church of God, and the conviction of gainsayers, and the great increase of light in the world. If he has more knowledge of this sort than hundreds of true saints of an ordinary education, and most divines; yet all is no certain evidence of any degree of saving grace in the heart.

It is true, the Scripture often speaks of knowledge of divine things as what is peculiar to true saints. As in John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Mat. 11:27, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Psa. 9:10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Phil. 3:8, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." But then, we must understand it

of a different *kind* of knowledge from that speculative understanding which the devil has to so great a degree. It will also be allowed, that the spiritual saving knowledge of God and divine things, greatly promotes speculative knowledge, as it engages the mind in its search into things of this kind, and much assists to a distinct understanding of them. So that, other things being equal, they who have spiritual knowledge are much more likely than others to have a good doctrinal acquaintance with things of religion. But yet such acquaintance may be no distinguishing characteristic of true saints.

III. It may also be inferred from what has been observed, that for persons merely to yield a *speculative assent* to the doctrines of religion as true is no certain evidence of a state of grace. My text tells us that the devils believe. And as they believe that there is one God, so they believe the truth of the doctrines of religion in general. The devil is orthodox in his faith. He believes the true scheme of doctrine. He is no Deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or antinomian. The articles of his faith are all sound, and in them he is thoroughly established.

Therefore, for a person to believe the doctrines of Christianity merely from the force of arguments, as discerned only by speculation, is no evidence of grace.

It is probably a very rare thing for unregenerate men to have a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrines of religion, specially such of them as are very mysterious, and much above the comprehension of reason. Yet if he be very confident of the truth of Christianity and its doctrines, and is able to argue most strongly for the proof of them, in this he goes nothing beyond the devil, who doubtless has a great knowledge of the rational arguments by which the truth of the Christian religion and its several principles are evinced.

And therefore when the Scripture speaks of *believing that Jesus is the Son of God,* as a sure evidence of grace, as in 1 John 5:1, and other places, it must be understood, not of a mere speculative assent, but of *another kind and manner* of believing, which is called the faith of God's elect, Tit.

1:1. There is a *spiritual* conviction of the truth, which is a believing with the whole heart, peculiar to true saints, of which I shall speak more particularly.

IV. It may be inferred from the doctrine which has been insisted on that it is no certain sign of persons being savingly converted that they have been subjects of very great *distress and terrors* of mind, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of damnation.

That the devils are the subjects of great terrors, through apprehensions of God's wrath, and fears of its future effects is implied in my text, which speaks not only of their believing, but *trembling*. It must be no small degree of terror which should make those principalities and powers, those mighty, proud, and sturdy beings, to tremble.

There are many terrors that some persons who are concerned for their salvation are the subjects of, which are not from any proper awakenings of conscience, or apprehensions of truth, but from melancholy or frightful impressions on their imagination, or some groundless apprehensions, and the delusions and false suggestions of Satan. But if they have had never so great and long continued terrors from real awakenings, and convictions of truth, and views of things as they are, this is no more than what is in the devils, and will be in all wicked men in another world. However stupid and senseless most ungodly men are now, all will be effectually awakened at last. There will be no such thing as slumbering in hell. There are many that cannot be awakened by the most solemn warnings and awful threatenings of the Word of God — the most alarming discourses from the pulpit, and the most awakening and awful providences — but all will be thoroughly awakened by the sound of the last trumpet and the appearance of Christ to judgment. All sorts will then be filled with most amazing terrors, from apprehensions of truth, and seeing things as they are, when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men (such as were the most ofty and stout-hearted, most ready to treat the things of religion with contempt) shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us,

and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6:15-17. — Therefore if persons have been first awakened, and afterwards have had comfort and joy, it is no certain sign that their comforts are of the right hand, because they were preceded by very great terrors.

V. It may be further inferred from the doctrine, that no *work of the law* on men's hearts, in conviction of guilt, and just desert of punishment, is a sure argument that a person has been savingly converted.

Not only are no awakenings and terrors any certain evidence of this, but no mere real work whatsoever, though carried to the utmost extent. Nothing wherein there is no grace or spiritual light, but only the mere conviction of natural conscience, and those acts and operations of the mind which are the result of this — and so are, as it were, merely forced by the clear light of conscience, without the concurrence of the heart and inclination with that light — is any certain sign of the saving grace of God, or that a person was ever savingly converted.

The evidence of this, from my text and doctrine, is demonstrative because the devils are the subjects of these thing. And all wicked men that shall finally perish, will be the subjects of the same. Natural conscience is not extinguished in the damned in hell, but, on the contrary, remains there in its greatest strength, and is brought to its most perfect exercise, most fully to do its proper office as God's vicegerent in the soul, to condemn those rebels against the King of heaven and earth, and manifest God's just wrath and vengeance, and by that means to torment them, and be as a never-dying worm within them. Wretched men find means in this world to blind the eyes and stop the mouth of this vicegerent of a sin-revenging God. But they shall not be able to do it always. In another world, the eyes and mouth of conscience will be fully opened. God will hereafter make wicked men to see and know these things from which now they industriously hide their eyes. Isa. 26:10, 11, "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when

thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." We have this expression often annexed to God's threatenings of wrath to his enemies; "And they shall know that I am the Lord." This shall be accomplished by their woeful experience and clear light in their consciences, whereby they shall be made to know, whether they will or not, how great and terrible, holy and righteous, a God Jehovah is, whose authority they have despised. And they shall know that he is righteous and holy in their destruction. This all the ungodly will be convinced of at the day of judgment, by the bringing to light of all their wickedness of heart and practice, and setting all their sins, with all their aggravations, in order, not only in the view of others, even of the whole world, but in the view of their own consciences. This is threatened, Psa. 50:21, "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Compare this with the four first verses of the Psalm. — The design of the day of judgment is not to find out what is just, as it is with human judgments. But it is to *manifest* what is just; to make known God's justice in the judgment which he will execute to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore that day is called "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2:5. Now sinners often cavil against the justice of God's dispensations, and particularly the punishment which he threatens for their sins, excusing themselves, and condemning him. But when God comes to manifest their wickedness in the light of that day and to call them to an account, they will be speechless. Mat. 22:11, 12, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless." When the King of heaven and earth comes to judgment, their consciences will be so perfectly enlightened and convinced by the all-searching Light they shall then stand in, that their mouths will be effectually stopped, as to all excuses for themselves, all pleading of their own righteousness to excuse or justify them, and all objections against the justice of their Judge, that their conscience will condemn them only, and not God.

Therefore it follows from the doctrine, That it can be no certain sign of

grace, that persons have had great convictions of sin. Suppose they have had their sins of life, with their aggravations, remarkably set before them, so as greatly to affect and terrify them. And withal, have had a great sight of the wickedness of their hearts, the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of the unexcusableness and heinousness of their most secret spiritual iniquities. Perhaps they have been convinced of the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, and they despair of being recommended to God by it. [They] have been convinced that they are wholly without excuse before God, and deserve damnation. And that God would be just in executing the threatened punishment upon them, though it be so dreadful. All these things will be in the ungodly at the day of judgment, when they shall stand with devils, at the left hand, and shall be doomed as accursed to everlasting fire with them.

Indeed there will be no submission in them. Their conscience will be convinced that God is just in their condemnation. But yet their wills will not be bowed to God's justice. There will be no acquiescence of mind in that divine attribute, no yielding of the soul to God's sovereignty, but the highest degree of enmity and opposition. A true submission of the heart and will to the justice and sovereignty of God is therefore allowed to be something peculiar to true converts, being something which the devils and damned souls are and ever will be far from. And to which a mere work of the law, and convictions of conscience, however great and clear, will never bring men.

When sinners are the subjects of great convictions of conscience, and a remarkable work of the law, it is only transacting the business of the day of judgment in the conscience before-hand. God sits enthroned in the conscience, as at the last day he will sit enthroned in the clouds of heaven. The sinner is arraigned as it were at God's bar. And God appears in his awful greatness as a just and holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, as he will then. The sinner's iniquities are brought to light. His sins set in order before him. The hidden things of darkness, and the counsels of the heart are made manifest, as it will be then. Many witnesses do as it were rise up against the sinner under convictions of conscience, as they will against the wicked at the day of judgment; and the books are opened particularly the book of God's strict and holy law is opened in the

conscience, and its rules applied for the condemnation of the sinner, which is the book that will be opened at the day of judgment, as the grand rule to all such wicked men as have lived under it. And the sentence of the law is pronounced against the sinner, and the justice of the sentence made manifest, as it will be at the day of judgment. The conviction of a sinner at the day of judgment will be a work of the law, as well as the conviction of conscience in this world. And the work of the law (if the work be merely legal) is never carried further in the consciences of sinners now than it will be at that day, when its work will be perfect in thoroughly stopping the sinner's mouth. Rom. 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every mouth shall be stopped by the law, either now or hereafter; and all the world shall become sensibly guilty before God, guilty of death, deserving of damnation. And therefore, if sinners have been the subjects of a great work of the law, and have thus become guilty, and their mouths have been stopped, it is no certain sign that ever they have been converted.

Indeed the want of a thorough sense of guilt, and desert of punishment, and conviction of the justice of God in threatening damnation is a sign that a person never was converted, and truly brought with the whole soul to embrace Christ as a Savior from this punishment. For it is easily demonstrable, that there is no such thing as entirely and cordially accepting an offer of a Savior from a punishment which we think we do not deserve. But having such a conviction is no certain sign that persons have true faith, or have ever truly received Christ as their Savior. And if persons have great comfort, joy, and confidence suddenly let into their minds, after great convictions, it is no infallible evidence that their comforts are built on a good foundation.

It is manifest, therefore, that too much stress has been laid by many persons on a great work of the law preceding their comforts, who seem not only to have looked on such a work of the law as necessary to precede faith, but also to have esteemed it as the chief evidence of the truth and genuineness of succeeding faith and comforts. By this means it is to be feared very many have been deceived and established in a false hope. And

what is to be seen in the event of things, in multitudes of instances, confirms this. It may be safely allowed that it is not so usual for great convictions of conscience to prove abortive, and fail of a good issue, as for lesser convictions. And that more generally when the Spirit of God proceeds so far with sinners, in the work of the law, as to give them a great sight of their hearts, and of the heinousness of their spiritual iniquities, and to convince them that they are without excuse, and that all their righteousness can do nothing to merit God's favor. But they lie justly exposed to God's eternal vengeance with mercy — a work of saving conversion follows. But we can have no warrant to say, it is universally so, or to lay it down as an infallible rule, that when convictions of conscience have gone thus far, saving faith and repentance will surely follow. If any should think they have ground for such a determination, because they cannot conceive what end God should have, in carrying a work of conviction to such a length, and so preparing the heart for faith, and after all, never giving saving faith to the soul, I desire it may be considered, where will be the end of our doubts and difficulties, if we think ourselves sufficient to determine so positively and particularly concerning God's ends and designs in what he does. It may be asked such an objector, what is God's end in giving a sinner any degree of the strivings of his Spirit and conviction of conscience, when he afterwards suffers it to come to nothing?

If he may give some degree that may finally be in vain, who shall set the bounds, and say how great the degree shall be? Who can, on sure grounds, determine that when a sinner has so much of that conviction which the devils and damned in hell have, true faith and eternal salvation will be the certain consequence? This we may certainly determine, that, if the apostle's argument in the text be good, not anything whatsoever that the devils have is certainly connected with such a consequence. Seeing sinners, while such, are capable of the most perfect convictions, and will have them at the day of judgment, and in hell, who shall say, that God never shall cause reprobates to anticipate the future judgment and damnation in that respect? And if he does so, who shall say to him, What dost thou? Or call him to account concerning his ends in so doing? Not but that many possible wise ends might be thought of, and mentioned, if it were needful, or I had now room for it. — The Spirit of God is often

quenched by the exercise of the wickedness of men's hearts, after he has gone far in a work of conviction, so that their convictions never have a good issue. And who can say that sinners, by the exercise of their opposition and enmity against God, which is not at all mortified by the greatest legal convictions, neither in the damned in hell nor sinners on earth, may not provoke God to take his Spirit from them, even after he has proceeded the greatest length in a work of conviction? Who can say, that God never is provoked to destroy some, after he has brought them, as it were, through the wilderness, even to the edge of the land of rest? As he slew some of the Israelites, even in the plains of Moab.

And let it be considered, where is our warrant in Scripture, to make use of any legal convictions, or any method or order of successive events in a work of the law, and consequent comforts, as a sure sign of regeneration. The Scripture is abundant, in expressly mentioning evidences of grace, and of a state of favor with God, as characteristics of true saints. But where do we ever find such things as these amongst those evidences? Or where do we find any other signs insisted on, besides grace itself, its nature, exercises, and fruits? These were the evidences that Job relied upon. These were the things that the Psalmist everywhere insists upon as evidences of his sincerity, and particularly in the 119th Psalm, from the beginning to the end: these were the signs that Hezekiah trusted to in his sickness.

These were the characteristics of those that are truly happy given by our Savior in the beginning of his sermon on the mount. These are the things that Christ mentions, as the true evidences of being his real disciples, in his last and dying discourse to his disciples, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, and in his intercessory prayer, chap. 17. These are the things which the apostle Paul often speaks of as evidences of his sincerity, and sure title to a crown of glory. And these are the things he often mentions to others, in his epistles, as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the spirit; love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance as the proper evidences of being Christ's, and living in the Spirit: Gal. 5:22-25. It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, etc. that he

insists on, as the most essential evidence of true godliness. Without which, all other things are nothing. Such are the signs which the apostle James insists on, as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man. Jam. 3:17, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." And such are the signs of true Christianity, which the apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have anywhere in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given, than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted, without its being first known what method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable. All the works of God are in some respects unsearchable. But the Scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God as peculiarly so. Isa. 40:13, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor, hath taught him?" Ecc. 11:5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VI. It follows from my text and doctrine, that it is no certain sign of grace that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation.

The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must necessarily, earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in Scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous, when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them. They come to the door, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Therefore, we are not to look on all desires that are very earnest and vehement, as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints. But there are also longings which unregenerate men may have, which are often mistaken for

marks of godliness. They think they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven. When, indeed, all is to be resolved into self-love. And so [it] is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of devils.

VII. It may be inferred from what has been observed, that persons who have no grace may have a great apprehension of an external glory in things heavenly and divine, and of whatsoever is external pertaining to religion.

If persons have impressed strongly on their minds ideas obtained by the external senses, whether by the ear, as any kind of sound, pleasant music, or words spoken of excellent signification, words of Scripture, suitable to their case, or adapted to the subject of their meditations, or ideas obtained by the eye, as of a visible beauty and glory, a shining light, golden streets, gates of precious stone, a most magnificent throne surrounded by angels and saints in shining ranks, or anything external belonging to Jesus Christ, either in his humbled state, as hanging on the cross with his crown of thorns, his wounds open, and blood trickling down, or in his glorified state, with awful majesty, or ravishing beauty and sweetness in his countenance, his face shining above the brightness of the sun, and the like. These things are no certain signs of grace.

Multitudes that are now in hell will have ideas of the external glory that pertains to things heavenly, far beyond whatever any have in this world. They will see all that external glory and beauty, in which Christ will appear at the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness before him, which, doubtless, will be ten thousand times greater than ever was impressed on the imagination of either saints or sinners in this present state, or ever was conceived by any mortal man.

VIII. It may be inferred from the doctrine that persons who have no grace may have a very great and affecting sense of many divine things on their

hearts.

The devil has not only great speculative knowledge, but he has a sense of many divine things, which deeply affects him, and is most strongly impressed on his heart. As,

First, the devils and damned souls have a great sense of the vast importance of the things of another world. They are in the invisible world, and they see and know how great the things of that world are. Their experience teaches them in the most affecting manner. They have a great sense of the worth of salvation, and the worth of immortal souls, and the vast importance of those things that concern men's eternal welfare. The parable in the latter end of the 16th chapter of Luke teaches this, in representing the rich man in hell, as entreating that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers to testify unto them, lest they should come to that place of torment. They who endure the torments of hell have doubtless a most lively and affecting sense of the vastness of an endless eternity, and of the comparative momentariness of this life, and the vanity of the concerns and enjoyments of time. They are convinced effectually, that all the things of this world, even those that appear greatest and most important to the inhabitants of the earth, are despicable trifles, in comparison of the things of the eternal world. They have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the means of grace, and the inestimable value of the privileges which they enjoy which live under the gospel. They are fully sensible of the folly of those that go on in sin, neglect their opportunities, make light of the counsels and warnings of God, and bitterly lament their exceeding folly in their own sins, by which they have brought on themselves so great and remediless misery. When sinners, by woeful experience, know the dreadful issue of their evil way, they will mourn at the last, saying, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! Pro. 4:11, 12, 13.

Therefore, however true godliness is attended with a great sense of the importance of divine things — and it is rare that men who have no grace maintain such a sense in any steady and persevering manner — yet it is manifest those things are no certain evidences of grace. Unregenerate

men may have a sense of the importance of eternity, and the vanity of time, the worth of immortal souls, the preciousness of time and the means of grace, and the folly of the way of allowed sin. They may have such a sense of those things, as may deeply affect them, and cause them to mourn for their own sins, and be much concerned for others. Though it be true, they have not these things in the same manner, and in all respects from the same principles and views, as godly men have them.

Second, devils and damned men have a strong and most affecting sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. This is greatly made manifest in the execution of divine vengeance on his enemies. Rom. 9:22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" The devils tremble before this great and terrible God and under a strong sense of his awful majesty. It is greatly manifested to them and damned souls now. But shall he manifested in a further degree, in that day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon them. And when they shall earnestly desire to fly, and be hid from the face of him that sits on the throne (which shall be, "because of the glory of his majesty," Isa. 2:10) and when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. When Christ comes at the last day, in the glory of his Father, every eye shall see him in that glory (in this respect, that they shall see his terrible majesty), and they also that pierced him, Rev. 1:7. Both those devils, and wicked men, which tormented and insulted him when he appeared in meanness and ignominy, shall then see him in the glory of his Father.

It is evident, therefore, that a sense of God's terrible majesty is no certain evidence of saving grace. For we see that wicked men and devils are capable of it. Yea, many wicked men in this world have actually had it. This is a manifestation which God made of himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at mount Sinai, which they saw, and with which they were deeply affected, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

Third, devils and damned men have some kind of conviction and sense of all attributes of God, both natural and moral, that is strong and very affecting.

The devils know God's almighty *power*. They saw a great manifestation of it when they saw God lay the foundation of the earth, etc. and were much affected with it. They have seen innumerable other great demonstrations of his power, as in the universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness, causing the sun to stand still in Joshua's time, and many others. — And they had a very affecting manifestation of God's mighty power on themselves in casting all their hosts down from heaven into hell. And have continual affecting experience of it, in God's reserving them in strong chains of darkness, and in the strong pains they feel. They will hereafter have far more affecting experience of it, when they shall be punished from the glory of God's power, with that mighty destruction in expectation of which they now tremble. So the devils have a great knowledge of the *wisdom* of God. They have had unspeakably more opportunity and occasion to observe it in the work of creation, and also in the works of providence, than any mortal man has ever had. And have been themselves the subjects of innumerable affecting manifestations of it, in God's disappointing and confounding them in their most subtle devices, in so wonderful and amazing a manner. So they see and find the infinite purity and *holiness* of the divine nature, in the most affecting manner, as this appears in his infinite hatred of sin, in what they feel of the dreadful effects of that hatred. They know already by what they suffer, and will know hereafter to a greater degree, and far more affecting manner, that such is the opposition of God's nature to sin, that is like a consuming fire, which burns with infinite vehemence against it. They also will see the holiness of God, as exercised in his love to righteousness and holiness, in the glory of Christ and his church, which also will be very affecting to devils and wicked men. And the exact *justice* of God will be manifested to them in the clearest and strongest, most convincing and most affecting, light, at the day of judgment; when they will also see great and affecting demonstrations of the riches of his *grace,* in the marvelous fruits of his love to the vessels of *mercy,* when they shall see them at the right hand of Christ, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them, and will be deeply affected with it, as seems naturally implied in Luke 13:28, 29. The devils know God's *truth,* and therefore they believe his threatenings, and tremble in

expectation of their accomplishment. And wicked men that now doubt his truth, and dare not trust his word, will hereafter, in the most convincing, affecting manner, find his word to be true in all that he has threatened, and will see that he is faithful to his promises in the rewards of his saints. Devils and damned men know that God is eternal and unchangeable. And therefore they despair of there ever being an end to their misery. Therefore it is manifest, that merely persons having an affecting sense of some, or even of all God's attributes, is no certain sign that they have the true grace of God in their hearts.

Object. Here possibly some may object against the force of the foregoing reasoning, that ungodly men in this world are in exceeding different circumstances from those in which the devils are, and from those which wicked men will be in at the day of judgment. Those things which are visible and present to these, are now future and invisible to the other. And wicked men in this world are in the body, that clogs and hinders the soul, and are encompassed with objects that blind and stupefy them. Therefore it does not follow, that because the wicked in another world have a great apprehension and lively sense of such things without grace, ungodly men in their present state may have the same.

Ans. To this I answer: It is not supposed that ever men in this life have all those things which have been mentioned to the same *degree* that the devils and damned have them. — None supposes that ever any in this life have terrors of conscience to an equal degree with them. It is not to be supposed that any mortal man, whether godly or ungodly, has an equal degree of speculative knowledge with the devil. And, as was just now observed, the wicked at the day of judgment, will have a vastly greater idea of the external glory of Christ than ever any have in the present state. So, doubtless, they will have a far greater sense of God's awful greatness and terrible majesty, than any could subsist under in this frail state. So we may well conclude, that the devils and wicked men in hell have a greater and more affecting sense of the vastness of eternity, and (in some respects) a greater sense of the importance of the things of another world than any here have. And they have also longings after salvation to a higher degree than any wicked men in this world.

But yet it is evident that men in this world may have things of the same

kind with devils and damned men, the same sort of light in the understanding, the same views and affections, the same sense of things, the same kind of impressions on the mind and on the heart. The objection is against the conclusiveness of that reasoning which is the apostle's more properly than mine. The apostle judged it a conclusive argument against such as thought their believing there was one God an evidence of their being gracious, that the devils believed the same. So the argument is exactly the same against such as think they have grace, because they believe God is a holy God, or because they have a sense of the awful majesty of God. — The same may be observed of other things that have been mentioned. My text has reference, not only to the act of the understandings of devils in believing, but to that affection of their hearts which accompanies the views they have, as trembling is an effect of the affection of the heart. Which shows, that if men have both the same views of understanding and also the same affections of heart that the devils have, it is no sign of grace.

And as to the particular degree to which these things may be carried in men in this world without grace, it appears not safe to make use of it as an infallible rule to determine men's state. I know not where we have any rule to go by, to fix the precise degree in which God by his providence, or his common influences on the mind, will excite in wicked men in this world, the same views and affections which the wicked have in another world. Which it is manifest, the former are capable of as well as the latter, having the same faculties and principles of soul, and which views and affections, it is evident, they often are actually the subjects of in some degree, some in a greater and some in a less degree. The infallible evidences of grace which are laid down in Scripture are of another kind. They are all of a holy and spiritual nature. And therefore things of that kind which a heart that is wholly carnal and corrupt cannot receive or experience, 1 Cor. 2:14. I might also here add that observation and experience, in very many instances, seem to confirm what Scripture and reason teaches in these things.

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Treatise on Grace

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CHAPTER I.

[Showing] THAT COMMON AND SAVING GRACE DIFFER, NOT ONLY IN DEGREE, BUT IN NATURE AND KIND.

SUCH phrases as common grace, and special or saving grace, may be understood as signifying either diverse kinds of influence of God's Spirit on the hearts of men, or diverse fruits and effects of that influence. The Spirit of God is supposed sometimes to have some influence upon the minds of men that are not true Christians, and [it is supposed] that those dispositions, frames, and exercises of their minds that are of a good tendency, but are common to them with the saints, are in some respect owing to some influence or assistance of God's Spirit. But as there are some things in the hearts of true Christians that are peculiar to them, and that are more excellent than any thing that is to be found in others, so it is supposed that there is an operation of the Spirit of God different, and that the value which distinguishes them is owing to a higher influence and assistance than the virtues of others. So that sometimes the phrase, *common grace, is* used to signify that kind of action or influence of the Spirit of God, to which are owing those religious or moral attainments that are common to both saints and sinners, and so signifies as much as common assistance; and sometimes those moral or religious attainments themselves that are the fruits of this assistance, are intended. So likewise the phrase, *special* or *saving* grace, is sometimes used to signify that

peculiar kind or degree of operation or influence of God's Spirit, whence saving actions and attainments do arise in the godly, or, which is the same thing, special and saving assistance; or else to signify that distinguishing saving virtue itself, which is the fruit of this assistance. These phrases are more frequently understood in the latter sense, viz., not for common and special assistance, but for common and special, or saving virtue, which is the fruit of that assistance, and so I would be understood by these phrases in this discourse.

And that special or saving grace in this sense is not only different from common grace in degree, but entirely diverse in nature and kind, and that natural men only have not a sufficient degree of virtue to be saints, but that they have no degree of that grace that is in godly men, is what I have now to show.

***1. This is evident by what Christ says in* John iii. 6,** where Christ, speaking of Regeneration, says-" That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ' Now, whatever Christ intends by the terms flesh and spirit in the words, yet this much is manifested and undeniable, that Christ here intends to shew Nicodemus the necessity of a new birth, or another birth than his natural birth, and that, from this argument, that a man that has been the subject only of the first birth, has nothing of that in his heart which be must have in order to enter into the kingdom. He has nothing at all of that which Christ calls spirit, whatever that be. All that a man [teas] that has been the subject only of a natural birth don't go beyond that which Christ calls flesh, for however it may be refined and exalted, yet it cannot be raised above flesh. 'Tis plain, that by flesh and spirit, Christ here intends two things entirely different in nature, which cannot be one from the other. A man cannot have anything of a nature superior to flesh that is not born again, and therefore we must be " born again." That by flesh and spirit are intended certain moral principles, natures, or qualities, entirely different and opposite in their nature one to another, is manifest from other texts, as particularly: Gal. v. 17-" For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and they are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things which ye would ;" Ver. 19, " Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication," &c. Ver. 22-'

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. and by Gal. vi. 8-" For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Rom. viii. 69-" For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," &c. 1 Cor. iii 1 " And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." So that it is manifest by this, that men that have been the subjects only of the first birth, have no degree of that moral principle or quality that those that are new born have, whereby they have a title to the kingdom of heaven. This principle or quality comes out then no otherwise than by birth, and the birth that it must come by is not, cannot be, the first birth, but it must be a new birth. If men that have no title to the kingdom of heaven, could have something of the Spirit, as well as flesh, then Christ's argument would be false. It is plain, by Christ's reasoning, that those that are not in a state of salvation, cannot have these two opposite principles in their hearts together, some flesh and some spirit, lusting one against the other as the godly have, but that they have flesh only.

2. That the only principle in those that are savingly converted, whence gracious acts flow which in the language of Scripture is called the Spirit, and set in opposition to the flesh, is that which others not only have not a sufficient degree of, but have nothing at all of, **is further manifest,** ***because the Scripture asserts both negatively****, that those that have not the Spirit are not Christ's.* Rom. viii. 9 " But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His ;" *and also* [positively] *that those that have the Spirit are His* 1 John iii. *24 "* Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us." And our having the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts is mentioned as a certain sign that persons are entitled to heaven, and is called the earnest of the future inheritance, (2 Cor. i 22, and v. 5, Eph. i 14 ;) which it would not be if others that had no title to the inheritance might have some of it dwelling in them.

Yea, that those that are not true saints have nothing of the Spirit no part nor portion of it, is still more evident, because not only a having any particular motion of the Spirit, but a being *of the Spirit* is given as a sure

sign of being in Christ. 1 John iv. 13-" Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us *of His Spirit*. If those that are not true saints have any degree of that spiritual principle, then though they have not so much, yet they have *of it,* and so that would be no sign that a person is in Christ. If those that have not a saving interest in Christ have nothing of the Spirit, then they have nothing; no degree of those graces that are the fruits of the Spirit, mentioned in Gal. v. 22-" But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith meekness, temperance." Those fruits are here mentioned with that very design, that we may know whether we have the Spirit or no.

3. Those that are not true saints, and in a state of salvation, not only have not so much of that holy nature and Divine principle that is in the hearts of the saints, but they do not partake of it, **because a being** ***"partakers of the Divine nature"*** is spoken of as the peculiar privilege of true saints, (2 Pet. i. 4.) It is evident that it is the true saints that the Apostle is there speaking of The words in this verse with the foregoing are these: " According as his Divine power hath given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The " Divine nature" and " lust" are evidently here spoken of as two opposite principles in man. Those that are in the world, and that are the men of the world, have only the latter principle; but to be partakers of the Divine nature is spoken of as peculiar to them that are distinguished and separated from the world, by the free and sovereign grace of God giving them all things that pertain to life and godliness, giving the knowledge of Him and calling them to glory and virtue, and giving them the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and that have escaped the corruption of the world of wicked men. And a being partakers of the Divine nature is spoken of, not only as peculiar to the saints, but as one of the highest privileges of the saints.

4. That those that have not a saving in Christ have no degree of that relish and sense of spiritual things or things of the

Spirit, of their Divine truth and excellency, which a true saint has, is evident **by 1 Cor. ii. 14-'**``The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." A natural man is here set in opposition to a spiritual one, or one that has the Spirit, as appears by the foregoing and following verses. Such we have strewn already the Scripture declares all true saints to be, and no other. Therefore by natural men are meant those that have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of His, and are the subjects of no other than the natural birth. But here we are plainly taught that a natural man is perfectly destitute of any sense, perception, or discerning of those things of the Spirit. [We are taught that] by the words " he neither does nor can know them, or discern them ;" so far from this they are " foolishness unto him ;" he is a perfect stranger, so that he does not know what the talk of such things means; they are words without a meaning to him; he knows nothing of the matter any more than a blind man of colours.

Hence it will follow, that the sense of things of religion that a natural man has, is not only not to the same degree, but nothing of the same nature with that which a true saint has. And besides, if a natural person has the fruit of the Spirit, which is of the same kind with what a spiritual person has, then he experiences within himself the things of the Spirit of God; and how then can he be said to be such a stranger to them, and have no perception or discerning of them ?

The reason why natural men have no knowledge of spiritual things is, because they have nothing of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. This is evident by the context: for there we are told that it is by the Spirit that these things are taught, (verses 1012 ,) and godly persons in the next verse are called spiritual, because they have the Spirit dwelling in them. Hereby the sense again is confirmed, for natural men are in no degree spiritual; they have only nature and no Spirit. If they had anything of the Spirit, though not in so great a degree as the godly, yet they would be taught spiritual things, or things of the Spirit, in proportion to the measure of the Spirit that they had. The Spirit that searcheth all things would teach them in some measure. There would not be so great a difference that the one could perceive nothing of them, and that they

should be foolishness to them, while to the other they appear divinely and remarkably wise and excellent, as they are spoken of in the context, (verses 69,) and as such the apostle spoke here of discerning them.

The reason why natural men have no knowledge or perception of spiritual things is, because they have none of the anointing spoken of. (I John ii. 27 :) " The anointing which ye have received of Him, abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you." This anointing is evidently spoken of here, as a thing peculiar to true saints. Ungodly men never had any degree of that holy oil poured upon them, and therefore have no discerning of spiritual things. Therefore none of that sense that natural men have of things of religion, is of the same nature with what the godly have. But to these they are totally blind. Therefore in conversion the eyes of the blind are opened. The world is wholly unacquainted with the Spirit of God, as appears by John xiv. 17, where we read about " the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it knoweth Him not."

5. Those that go for those in religion that are not true saints and in a state of salvation have no charity, as is plainly implied in the beginning of the* XIII.th *chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians.Therefore they have no degree of that kind of grace, disposition, or affection, that is so called. So Christ elsewhere reproves the Pharisees, those high pretenders to religion among the Jews, that they bad not the love of God in them, (John v. 42.)

6. That those that are not true saints have no degree of that grace that the saints have is evident, because they have no communion or fellowship with Christ.If those that are not true saints partake of any of that Spirit, those holy inclinations and affections, and gracious acts of soul that the godly have from the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, then they would have communion with Christ. The communion of saints with Christ does certainly very much consist in that receiving of His fulness and partaking of His grace spoken of, John i. 16 " Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace ;" and in partaking of that Spirit which God gives not by measure unto Him. Partaking of Christ's holiness and grace, His nature, inclinations, tendencies, love, and desires, comforts and delights, must be to have communion with Christ Yea, a believer's communion with the Father and the Son does mainly

consist in his partaking of the Holy (}host, as appears by 2 Cor. xiii. 14-" The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *communion* of the Holy Ghost."

But that unbelievers have no fellowship or communion with Christ appears, (1.) because they are not united to Christ. They are not in Christ. For the Scripture is very plain and evident in this, that those that are in Christ are actually in a state of salvation, and are justified sanctified, accepted of Christ, and shall be saved. Phil. iii. 8, 9- "' Yea doubtless, and I count all thing) but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found *in Him." 2* Cor. v. 17-" If any man be *in Christ,* he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 1 John ii 5-" But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are *in Him ;"* and iii. 24-" He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him: and hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us. ' But those that are not in Christ, and are not united to Him, can have no degree of communion with Him. For there is communion without union. The members can have no communion with the head or participation of its life and health unless they are united to it. The branch must be united with the vine, otherwise there can be no communication from the vine to it, nor any partaking of any degree of its sap, or life, or influence. So without the union of the wife to the husband, she can have no communion in his goods. (2.) The Scripture does more directly teach that it is only true saints that have communion with Christ, as particularly this is most evidently spoken of as what belongs to the saints, and to them only, in 1 John i. 3, together with verses 6, 7-" That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Ver. 6-" If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Also in 1 Cor. i 9 " God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Christ Jesus our Lord."

7. The Scripture speaks of the actual being of a truly holy and gracious principle in the heart, as inconsistent with a man's being a sinner or a wicked man.1 John iii. 9-" Whosoever is born of God cloth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Here it is needless to dispute what is intended by this seed, whether it be a principle of true virtue and a holy nature in the soul, or whether it be the word of God as the cause of that virtue. For let us understand it in either sense, it comes to much the same thing in the present argument; for if by the seed is meant the word of God, yet when it is spoken of as abiding in him that is born again, it must be intended, with respect to its effect, as a holy principle in his heart: for the word of God does not abide in one that is born again more than another, any other way than in its effect. The word of God abides in the heart of a regenerate person as a holy seed, a Divine principle there, though it may be but as a seed, a small thing. The seed is a very small part of the plant, and is its first principle. It may be in the heart as a grain of mustard seed, may be hid, and seem to be in a great measure buried in the earth. But yet it is inconsistent with wickedness. The smallest degrees and first principles of a Divine and holy nature and disposition are inconsistent with a state of sin; whence it is said " he cannot sin." There is no need here of a critical inquiry into the import of that expression; for doubtless so much at least is implied through this, " his seed being in him," as is inconsistent with his being a sinner or a wicked man. So that this heavenly plant of true holiness cannot be in the heart of a sinner, no, not so much as in its first principle.

8. This is confirmed by the things that conversion is represented by in the Scriptures, particularly its being represented as a work of creation.When God creates He does not merely establish and perfect the things which were made before, but makes wholly and immediately something entirely new, either out of nothing, or out of that which was perfectly void of any such nature, as when He made man of the dust of the earth. " The things that are seen are not made of things that do appear." Saving grace in man is said to be the new man or a new creature, and corrupt nature the old man. If that nature that is in the heart of a godly man be not different in its nature and kind from all that went before, then the man might possibly have had the

same things a year before, and from time to time from the beginning of his life, but only not quite to the same degree. And how then is grace in him, the new man or the new creature ?

Again, conversion is often compared to a resurrection. Wicked men are said to be dead, but when they are converted they are represented as being by God's mighty and effectual power raised from the dead. Now there is no medium between being dead and alive. He that is dead has no degree of life; he that has the least degree of life in him is alive. When a man is raised from the dead, life is not only in a greater degree, but it is all new.

The same is manifest by conversion being represented as a new birth or as regeneration. Generation is not only perfecting what is old, but 'tis a begetting from the new. The nature and life that is then received has then its beginning: it receives its first principles.

Again, conversion in Scripture is represented as an opening of the eyes of the blind. In such a work those have light given them that were totally destitute of it before. So in conversion, stones are said to be raised up children to Abraham: while stones they are altogether destitute of all those qualities that afterwards render them the living children of Abraham, and not only had them not in so great a degree. Agreeably to this, conversion is said to be a taking away a heart *of* stone and a giving a heart of flesh. The man while unconverted has a heart of stone which has no degree of that life and sense that the heart of flesh has, because it yet remains a stone, than which nothing is further from life and sense.

Inference 1. *From* what has been said, I would observe *that it must need & be that conversion is rought at once.* That knowledge, that reformation and conviction that is preparatory to conversion may be gradual, and the work of grace after conversion may be gradually carried on, yet that work of grace upon the soul whereby a person is brought out of a state of total corruption and depravity into a state of grace, to an interest in Christ, and to be actually a child of God, is in a moment.

It must needs be the consequence; for if that grace or virtue that a person has when he is brought into a state of grace be entirely different in nature

and kind from all that went before, then it will follow that the last instant before a person is actually a child of God and in a state of grace, a person has not the least degree of any real goodness, and of that true virtue that is in a child of God.

Those things by which conversion is represented in Scripture hold forth the same thing. In creation something is brought out of nothing in an instant. God speaks and it its done, He commands and it stands fast. When the dead are raised sea, it is done in a moment. Thus when Christ called Lazarus out of his grave, it was not a gradual work. He said, " Lazarus, come forth," and there went life with the call. He heard His voice and lived. So Christ, John v. 2.;- " Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice *of the* Son of God: and they that hear shall live,"-which words must be understood of the work of conversion. In creation, being is called out of nothing and instantly obeys the call, and in the resurrection the dead are called into life: as soon as the call is given the dead obey.

By reason of this instantaneousness of the work of conversion, one of the names under which conversion is frequently spoken of in Scripture, is *calling:* Rom. viii. 28 30. " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Acts ii 3739-" Now when hen they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do ? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for tile remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Heb. ix. 15, (last clause)-`' that they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." I Thess. v. 23, 24-" And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.... Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it." Nothing else can be meant in those places by calling than what Christ

does in a sinner's saving conversion. By which it seems evident that it is done at once and not gradually; whereby Christ, through His great power, does but speak the powerful word and it is done, He does but call and the heart of the sinner immediately comes. It seems to be symbolized by Christ's calling His disciples, and their immediately following Him. So when he called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they were minding other things; but at His call they immediately left all and followed Him. Matt. iv. 18 22 Peter and Andrew were casting a net into the sea, and Christ says to them as He passed by, Follow me; and it is said, they straightway left their nets and followed Him. So James and John were in the ship with Zebedee their father mending their nets, and He called them, and immediately they left the ship and their father and followed Him. So when Matthew was called: Matt. ix. 9-" And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him." Now whether they were then *converted* or not, yet doubtless Christ in thus calling His first disciples to a visible following of Him, represents to us the manner in which He would call men to be truly His disciples and spiritually to follow Him in all ages. There is something immediately and instantaneously put into their hearts at that call that they had nothing of before, that effectually disposes them to follow.

It is very manifest that almost all the miracles of Christ that He wrought when on earth were types of His great work of converting sinners, and the manner of His working those miracles holds forth the instantaneousness of the work of conversion. Thus when He healed the leper, which represented His healing us of our spiritual leprosy, He put forth His hand and touched him, and said, " I will; be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Matt. viii. :3; Mark i. 42; Luke v. 13. And so, in opening the eyes of the blind, which represents His opening the eyes of our blind souls, (Matt. xx. 30, &c.,) He touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him. So Mark x. 52; Luke xviii. 43. So when He healed the sick, which represents His healing our spiritual diseases, or conversion, it was done at once. Thus when He healed Simon's wife's mother, (Mark i 31,) He took her by the hand and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. So when the woman which had the issue of blood

touched the hem of Christ's garment, immediately the issue of blood stanched, (Luke viii. 44.) So the woman that was bowed together with the spirit of infirmity, when Christ laid His hands upon her, immediately she was made straight, and glorified God, (Luke 13:12,13;) which represents that action on the soul whereby He gives an upright heart, and sets the soul at liberty from its bondage to glorify Him. So the man at the pool of Bethesda, when Christ bade him rise, take up his bed and walk, (he) was immediately made whole, (John v. 8, 9) After the same manner Christ cast out devils, which represents His dispossessing the devil of our souls in conversion; and so He settled the winds and waves, representing His subduing, in conversion, the heart of the wicked, which is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; and so He raised the dead, which represented His raising dead souls.

The same is confirmed by those things which conversion is compared to in Scripture. It is often compared to a resurrection. Natural men (as was said before) are said to be dead, and to be raised when they are converted by God's mighty effectual power from the dead. Now, there is no medium between being dead and alive; he that is dead has no degree of life in him, he that has the least degree of life in him its alive. When a man is raised from the dead, life is not only in a greater degree in him than it was before, but it is all new. The work of conversion seems to be compared to a raising the dead to life, in this very thing, even its instantaneousness, or its being done, as it were, at a word's speaking. As in John v. 25, (before quoted)-" Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." He speaks here of a work of conversion, as appears by the preceding verse; and by the words themselves, which spear: of the time of this raising the dead, not only as to come hereafter, but as what was already come. This shows conversion to be an immediate instantaneous work, like to the change made on Lazarus when Christ called him from the grave: there went life with the call, and Lazarus was immediately alive. Immediately before the call sinners are dead or wholly destitute of life, as appears by the expression, " *The dead* shall hear the voice," and immediately after the call they are alive; yea, there goes life with the word, as is evident, not only because it is said they shall live, but also because it is said, they shall hear His voice. The first moment they have

any life is the moment when Christ calls, and as soon as they are called, which further appears by what was observed before, even that a being called and converted are spoken of in Scripture as the same thing.

The same is confirmed (as observed before) from conversion being compared to a work of creation, which is a work wherein something is made either out of nothing, or out of that having no degree of the same kind of qualities and principles, as when God made man of the dust of the earth. Thus it is said, " If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ;" which obviously implies that he is an exceeding diverse kind of creature from what he was before he was in Christ, that the principle or qualities that he has by which he is a Christian, are entirely new, and what there was nothing of, before he was in Christ.

Inference* 2.** Hence we may learn that ***it is impossible for men to convert themselves by their own strength and industry, with only a concurring assistance helping in the exercise of their natural abilities and principles of the soul, and securing their improvement. For what is gained after this manner is a gradual acquisition, and not something instantaneously begotten, and of an entirely different nature, and wholly of a separate kind, from all that was in the nature of the person the moment before. All that men can do by their own strength and industry is only gradually to increase and improve and newmodel and direct qualities, principles, and perfections of nature that they have already. And that is evident, because a man in the exercise and improvement of the strength and principles of his own nature has nothing but the qualities, powers, and perfections that are already in his nature to work with, and nothing but them to work upon; and therefore 'tis impossible that by this only, anything further should be brought to *pass,* than only a new modification of what is already in the nature of the soul. That which is only by an improvement of natural qualities, principles, and perfections- let these things be improved never so much and never so industriously, and never so long, they'll still be no more than an improvement of those natural qualities, principles, and perfections; and therefore not anything of an essentially distinct and superior nature and kind.

'Tis impossible (as Dr. Clarke observes) "that any effect should have any

perfection that was not in the cause: for if it had, then that perfection would be caused by nothing." * 'Tis therefore utterly impossible that men's natural perfections and qualities in that exercise, and however assisted in that exercise, should produce in the soul a principle or perfection of a nature entirely different from all of them, or any manner of improvement or modification of them.

The qualities and principles of natural bodies, such as figure or motion, can never produce anything beyond themselves. If infinite comprehensions and divisions be eternally made, the things must still be eternally the same, and all their possible effects can never be anything but repetitions of the same. Nothing can be produced by only those qualities of figure and motion, beyond figure and motion: and so nothing can be produced in the soul by only its internal principles, beyond these principles or qualities, or new improvements and modifications of them. And if we suppose a concurring assistance to enable to a more full and perfect exercise of those natural principles and qualities, unless the assistance or influence actually produces something beyond the exercise of internal principle: still, it is the same thing. Nothing will be produced but only an improvement and new modification of those principles that are exercised. Therefore it follows that saving grace in the heart, can't be produced in man by mere exercise of what perfections he has in him already, though never so much assisted by moral suasion, and never so much assisted in the exercise of his natural principles, unless there be something more than all this, viz., an immediate infusion or operation of the Divine Being upon the soul. Grace must be the immediate work of God, and properly a production of His Almighty power on the soul.

* The wolfknown a priori argument of this eminent thinker, if somewhat uncertain divine, entitled " A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God."

CHAPTER II.

Showing WHEREIN ALL SAVING GRACE DOES SUMMARILY CONSIST.

THE next thing that arises for consideration is, What is the nature of this

principle in the soul that is so entirely diverse from all that is naturally in the soul ? Here I would observe,—

1. That that saving grace that is in the hearts of the saints, that within them [which is] above nature, and entirely distinguishes 'em from all unconverted men, is radically but one—i.e., however various its exercises are, yet it is but one in its root; 'tis one individual principle in the heart.

'Tis common for us to speak of various graces of the Spirit of God as though they were so many different principles of holiness, and to call them by distinct names as such,—repentance, humility, resignation, thankfulness, &c. But we err if we imagine that these in their first source and root in the heart are properly distinct principles. They all come from the same fountain, and are, indeed, the various exertions and conditions of the same thing; only different denominations according to the various occasions, objects, and manners, attendants and circumstances of its exercise. There is some one holy principle in the heart that is the essence and sum of all grace, the root and source of all holy acts of every kind, and the fountain of every good stream, into which all Christian virtues may ultimately be resolved, and in which all duty and [all] holiness is fulfilled.

Thus the Scripture represents it. Grace in the soul is one fountain of water of life, (John iv. 14,) and not various distinct fountains. So God, in the work of Regeneration, implants one heavenly seed in the soul, and not various different seeds. l John iii. 9 - " Whosoever is born of God cloth not commit sin; for His *seed* remaineth in him." . . . The Day [that] has arisen on the soul is but one. The oil in the vessel is simple and pure, conferred by one holy anointing. All is " wrought" by one individual work of the Spirit of God. And thus it is there is a consentanation* of graces. Not only is one grace in some way allied to another, and so tends to help and promote one another, but one is really implied in the other. The nature of one involves the nature of another. And the great reason of it is, that all graces have one common essence, the original principle of all, and is but one. Strip the various parts of the Christian soul of their circumstances, concomitants. appendages means, and occasions, and consider that which is, as it were, their *soul* and essence, and all appears

to be the same. [I observe]

2. That principle in the soul of the saints, which is the grand Christian virtue and which is the soul and essence and summary comprehension of all grace, is a principle of Divine Love. This is evident,

(1.) Because we are abundantly taught in the Scripture that Divine Love is the sum of all duty; and that all that God requires of us is fulfilled in it,—*i.e.,* That Love is the sum of all duty of the heart, and its exercises and fruits the sum of all [the] duty of life. But if the duty of the heart, or all due dispositions of hearts, are all summed up in love, then undoubtedly all grace may be summed up in LOVE.

The Scripture teaches us that all our duty is summed up in love; or, which is the same thing, that 'tis the sum of all that is required in the Law; and that, whether we take the Law as signifying the Ten Commandments, or the whole written Word of God. So when by the Law is meant the Ten Commandments: Rom, xiii 8— " Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law ;" and, therefore, several of these commandments are there rehearsed. And again, in ver. 10, " Love is the fulfilling of the Law." And unless love was the sum of what the Law required, the Law could not be fulfilled in Love. A law is not fulfilled but by obedience to the sum of what it contains. So the same Apostle again: 1 Tim. i a—" Now the end of the commandment is charity" [love.]

If we take the Law in a yet more extensive sense for the whole written Word of God, the Scripture still teaches us that Love is the sum of what is required in it. [Thus] Matt. xxii. 40. There Christ teaches us that on these two precepts of loving God and our neighbour hang all the Law and the Prophets,—that is, all the written Word of God. So that what was called the Law and the Prophets was the whole written Word of God that was then extant. The Scripture teacher this of each table of the Law in particular.

Thus, the Lawyer that we read of in the X.th chapter of Luke, vv. 2a-28, mentions the love of God and our neighbour as the sum of the two Tables

of the Law; and Christ approves of what he says. When he stood up and tempted Christ with this question, " Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? " Christ asks him what was required of him " in the Law?" He makes answer, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself; " and Christ replies, " Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live ;" as much as to say, " Do this, then thou hast fulfilled the whole Law."

So in Matthew xxii., vv. 36-38, that commandment, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," is given by Christ himself as the sum of the first Table of the Law, in answer to the question of the Lawyer, who asked Him, " Which is the great commandment of the Law ?" And in the next verse, loving our neighbours as ourselves is mentioned as the sum of the second Table, as it is also in Romans xiii. 9, where most of the precepts of the second Table are rehearsed over in particular: " For this, Thou not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"

The Apostle James seems to teach the same thing. James ii. 8— " If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well."

Thus frequent, express, and particular is the Scripture in teaching us that all duty is comprehended in Love. The Scripture teaches us, in like manner, of nothing else. This is quite another thing than if Religion in general had only sometimes gone under the name of the Love of Cod, as it sometimes goes by the name of the fearing of God, and sometimes the knowledge of God, and sometimes feeling of God.

This argument does fully and irrefragably prove that all grace, and every Christian disposition and habit of mind and heart, especially as to that which is primarily holy and Divine in it, does summarily consist in Divine Love, and may be resolved into it: however, with respect to its kinds and manner of exercise and its appendages, it may be diversified. For

certainly there is no duty of heart, or due disposition of mind, but what is included in the " Law and the Prophets," and is required by some precept of that Law and rule which He has given mankind to walk by. But yet the Scripture affords us other evidences of the truth of this.

(2.) The Apostle speaks of Divine Love as that which is the essence of all Christianity in the XIII.th chapter of [the] 1st [Epistle* to the] *Corinthians. There the Apostle evidently means a comparison between the gifts of the Spirit and the grace of the Spirit. In the foregoing chapter the Apostle had been speaking of the gifts of the Spirit throughout, such as the gift of wisdom, the gift of knowledge, the gift of faith, the gift of healing or working miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, speaking with tongues, &c.; and in the last verse in the chapter he exhorts the Corinthians to " covet earnestly the best gifts;" but adds, " and yet I shew you a more excellent way," and so proceeds to discourse of the saving grace of the Spirit under the name of agape' love, and to compare this saving grace in the heart with those gifts. Now,'tis manifest that the comparison is between the gifts of the Spirit that were common to both saints and sinners, and that saving grace that distinguishes true saints; and therefore, charity or love is here understood by Divines as intending the same thing as sincere grace of heart.

By love or charity here there is no reason to understand the Apostle [as speaking] only of love to men, but that principle of Divine Love that is in the heart of the saints in the full extent, which primarily has God for its object. For there is no reason to think that the Apostle doesn't mean the same thing by charity here as he does in the VIII.th chapter of the same Epistle, where he is comparing the same two things together, knowledge and charity, as he does here. But there he explains himself to mean by charity the love of God: [verses 1-3] " Now, as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of Him," &c.*

'Tis manifest that Love or charity is here (chap. xiii.) spoken of as the very essence of all Christianity, and is the very thing wherein a gracious sincerity consists. For the Apostle speaks of it as the most excellent, the

most necessary, and essential thing of all, without which all that makes the greatest, and fairest, and most glittering show in Religion is nothing—without which, " if we speak with the tongues of men and angels, we are become as sounding brass and tinlding cymbals"—and without which, though we have " the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and should bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, we are nothing." Therefore, how can we understand the Apostle any otherwise than that this is the very thing whereof the essence of all consists; and that he means the same by charity as a gracious charity, as indeed it is generally understood. If a man does all these things here spoken, makes such glorious prophecies, has such knowledge, such faith, and speaks so excellently, and performs such excellent external acts, and does such great things in religion as giving all his goods to the poor and giving his body to be burned, what is wanting but one thing

The very quintessence of all Religion, the very thing wherein lies summarily the sincerity, spirituality, and divinity of Religion. And that, the Apostle teaches us, is LOVE

And further, 'tis manifestly the Apostle's drift to shew how this excellent principle does radically comprehend all that is good. For he goes on to skew how all essences of good and excellent dispositions and exercises, both towards God and towards man, are virtually contained and will flow from this one principle: " Love suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, . . . endureth all things," &c. The words of this last verse especially respects duties to God, as the former did duties to men, as I would shew more particularly afterwards.

Thus the Apostle don't only love or charity as the most excellent thing in Christianity, and as the quintessence, life and soul of all Religion, but as that which virtually comprehends all holy virtues and exercises. And because Love is the quintessence and soul of all grace, wherein the divinity and holiness of all that belongs to charity does properly and essentially consist; therefore, when Christians come to be in their most perfect state, and the Divine nature in them shall be in its greatest exaltation and purity, and be free from all mixtures, stripped of these

appurtenances and that clothing that it has in the present state; and [when] it shall lose many other of its denominations, especially from the peculiar manner and exercises accommodated to the imperfect circumstances of the present state, they will be what will remain. All other names will be swallowed up in the name of charity or love, as the Apostle, agreeably to his chapter on tiers, (1 Cor. chap. xiii,) observes in verses 8-10— Charity never faileth.... But when that *which is perfect is come* then that which is in part shall be done away." And, therefore, when the Apostle, in the last verse, speaks of charity as the greatest grace, we may well understand him in the same sense as when Christ speaks of the command to love God, &c., as the greatest commandment— viz, that among the graces, that is the source and sum of all graces, as that commanded is spoken of as the sum of all commands, and requiring that duty which is the ground of all other duties.

It must be because Charity is the quintessence and soul of all duty and all good in the bears that the Apostle says that it is " the end of the commandment," for doubtless the main end of the commandment is to promote that which is most essential in Religion and constituent of holiness.

3. Reason bears witness to the same thing.

***(1.) Reason testifies that Divine Love is so essential in Religion that all Religion is but hypocrisy and a " vain show " without* it.** What is Religion but the exercise and expressions of regard to the Divine Being ? But certainly if there be no love to Him, there is no sincere regard to Him; and all presences and show of respect to Him, whether it be in word or deed, must be hypocrisy, and of no value in the eyes of Him who sees the heart. How manifest is it that without love there can be no true honour, no sincere praise I And how can obedience be hearty, if it be not a testimony of respect to God ? The fear of God without love is no other than the fear of devils; and all that outward respect and obedience, all that resignation, that repentance and sorrow for sin, that form in religion, that outward devotion that is performed merely from such a fear without love, is all of it a practical lie, as in Psalm lxvi 3 - " . . How terrible art Thou in Thy works ! through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee." In the original it is "

shall Thine enemies lie unto Thee "—i.e., shall yield a feigned or lying obedience and respect to Thee, when still they remain enemies in their hearts. There is never a devil in hell but what would perform all that many a man [has] performed in religion, that had no love to God; and a great deal more if they were in like circumstances and the like hope of gain by it, and be as much of a devil in his heart as he is now. The Devil once seemed to be religious from fear of torment: Luke viii 28 " When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee, torment me not." Here is external worship. The Devil is religious; he prays—he prays in a humble posture; he falls down before Christ, he lies prostrate; he prays earnestly, he cries with a loud voice; he uses humble expressions—``I beseech Thee, torment me not;" he uses respectful, honourable, adoring expressions—"Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High." Nothing was wanting but Loom

And with respect to duties towards men, no good offices would be accepted by men one from another, if they saw the heart, and knew they did not proceed from any respect in the heart. If a child carry it very respectfully to his father, either from a strong fear, or from hope of having the larger inheritance when his father is dead, or from the like consideration, and not at all from any respect to his father in his heart; if the child's heart were open to the view of his father, and he plainly knew that there was no real regard to him, Would the child's outward honour and obedience be acceptable to the parent ? So if a wife should carry it very well to her husband, and not at all from any love to him, but from other considerations plainly seen, and certainly known by the husband, Would he at all delight in her outward respect any more than if a wooden image were contrived to make respectful motions in his presence ?

If duties towards men are [to be] accepted of God as a part of Religion and the service of the Divine Being, they must be performed not only with a hearty love to men, but that love must flow from regard to Him.

(2.) Reason shows *that all good dispositions and duties are wholly comprehended in, and will flow from, Divine Love.* Love to God and men implies all proper respect or regard to God and men; and all proper acts and expressions of regard to both will flow from it, and

therefore all duty to both. To regard God and men in our heart as we ought, and to have that nature of heart towards them that we ought, *is* the same thing. And, therefore, a proper regard or love comprehends all virtue of heart; and he that shews all proper regard to God and men in his practice, performs all that in practice towards them which is his duty. The Apostle says, Romans. xiii 10 - " Love works no ill to his neighbour." 'Tis evident by his reasoning in that place, that he means more than is expressed—that love works no ill but all good, all our duty to our neighbour: which Reason plainly shews. And as the Apostle teaches that love to our neighbour works no ill but all good towards our neighbour; so, by a parity of reason, love to God works no ill, but all our duty towards God.

A Christian love to God, and Christian love to men, are not properly two distinct principles in the heart. These varieties are radically the same; the same principle flowing forth towards different objects, according to the order of their existence. God is the First Cause of all things, and the Fountain and Source of all good; and men are derived from Him, something of His image, and are the objects of His mercy. So the first and supreme object of Divine Love is God; and men are loved either as the children of God or His creatures, and those that are in His image, and the objects of His mercy, or in some respects related to God, or partakers of His loveliness, or at least capable of happiness.

That love to God, and a Christian love to men, are thus but one in their root and foundation-principle in the heart, is confirmed by several passages in the First Epistle of John: chap. iii. verses 16, 17— " Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, . . . how dwelleth the love of God in him ?" Chap. iv. 2(), 21—"If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen] And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Chap. v. 1, 2 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."

Therefore to explain the nature of Divine Love, what is principally requisite is to explain the nature of love to God. For this may especially be called Divine Love; and herein all Christian love or charity does radically consist, for this is the fountain of all.

As to a definition of Divine Love, things of this nature are not properly capable of a definition. They are better felt than defined. Love is a term as clear m its signification, and that does as naturally suggest to the wind the thing signified by it, as any other term or terms that we can find out or substitute in its room. But yet there may be a great deal of benefit in descriptions that may be given of this heavenly principle though they all are imperfect. They may serve to limit the signification of the term and distinguish this principle from other things, and to exclude counterfeits, and also more clearly to explain some things that de' appertain to its nature.

Divine Love, as it has God for its object, may be thus described. 'Tis the soul's relish of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature, inclining the heart to God as the chief good

The first thing in Divine Love, and that from which everything that appertains to it arises, is a relish of the excellency of the Divine nature; which the soul of man by nature has nothing of

The first effect that is produced in the soul, whereby it is carried above what it has or can have by nature, is to cause it to relish or taste the sweetness of the Divine relation. That is the first and most fundamental thing in Divine Love, and that from which everything else that belongs to Divine Love naturally and necessarily proceeds. When once the soul is brought to relish the excellency of the

Divine nature, then it will naturally, and of course, incline to God every way. It will incline to be with Him and to enjoy Him. It will have benevolence to God. It will be glad that He is happy. It will incline that He should be glorified, and that His will should be done in all things. So that the first effect of the power of God in the heart in REGENERATION, is to give the heart a Divine taste or sense; to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the Divine nature;

and indeed this is all the immediate effect of the Divine Power that there is, this is all the Spirit of God needs to do, in order to a production of all good effects in the soul. If God, by an immediate act of His, gives the soul a relish of the excellency of His own nature, other things will follow of themselves without any further act of the Divine power than only what is necessary to uphold the nature of the faculties of the soul. He that is once brought to see, or rather to taste, the superlative loveliness of the Divine Being, will need no more to make him long after the enjoyment of God, to make him rejoice in the happiness of God, and to desire that this supremely excellent Being may be pleased and glorified And if this be true, then the main ground of true love to God is the excellency of His own nature, and not any benefit we have received, or hope to receive, by His goodness to us. Not but that there is such a thing as a gracious gratitude to God for mercies bestowed upon us; and the acts and fruits of His goodness to us may [be,] and very often are, occasions and incitements of the exercise of true love to God, as I must shew more particularly hereafter. But love or affection to God, that has no other good than only some benefit received or looped for from God, is not true love. [If it be] without any sense of a delight in the absolute excellency of the Divine nature, [it.] has nothing Divine in it. Such gratitude towards God requires no more to be in the soul than that human nature that all men are born with, or at least that human nature well cultivated and improved, or indeed not further vitiated and depraved than it naturally is. It is possible that natural men, without the addition of any further principle than they have by nature, may be affected with gratitude by some remarkable kindness of God to them, as that they should be so affected with some great act of kindness of a neighbour. A principle of self-love is all that is necessary to both. But Divine Love is a principle distinct from self-love, and from all that arises from it. Indeed, after a man is come to relish the sweetness of the supreme good there is in the nature of God, self-love may have a hand in an appetite after the enjoyment of that good. For self-love will necessarily make a man desire to enjoy that which is sweet to him. But God's perfections must first savour appetite and [be] sweet to men, or they must first have a taste to relish sweetness in the perfection *of* God, before self-love can have any influence upon them to cause an appetite after the enjoyment of that sweetness. And therefore that divine taste or relish of the soul, wherein

Divine Love cloth most fundamentally consist, is prior to all influence that self-love can have to incline us to God; and so must be a principle quite distinct from it, and independent of it.

CHAPTER III.

Showing HOW A PRINCIPLE OF GRACE IS FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

I. That this holy and Divine principle, which we have strewn does radically and summarily consist in Divine Love, comes into existence in the soul by the power of God in the influences of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the blessed Trinity, is abundantly manifest from the Scriptures.

Regeneration is by the Spirit: John iii. 5, 6—" Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And verse 8 - " The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The renewing of the soul is by the Holy Ghost: Titus iii 5— " Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." A new heart. is given by God's putting His Spirit within us: Ezekiel 36: 26, 27—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Quickening of the dead soul is by the Spirit: John vi. 63 - " It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Sanctification is by the Spirit of God: 2 Thess. ii 13—" God hath from the beginning chosen you *to* salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Romans xv. 16 - '" that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. vi 11—"Such were some of you: but

ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Peter i. 2—·' Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification *of* the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." All grace in the heart is the fruit of the Spirit: Gal. v. 22, 23 - " But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Eph. v 9—" The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Hence the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of grace, (Heb. x. 29.)

This doctrine of a gracious nature being by the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, is not only taught in the Scriptures, but is irrefragable to Reason. Indeed there seems to be a strong disposition in men to disbelieve and oppose the doctrine of true disposition, to disbelieve and oppose the doctrine of immediate influence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men, or to diminish and make it as small and remote a matter as possible, and put it as far out of sight as may be. Whereas it seems to me, true virtue and holiness would naturally excite a prejudice (if I may so say) in favour of such a doctrine; and that the soul, when in the most excellent frame, and the most lively exercise of virtue,—love to God and delight in Him,— would naturally and unavoidably think of God as kindly communicating Himself to him, and holding communion with him, as though he did as it were see God smiling on him, giving to him and conversing with him; and that if he did not so think of God, but, on the contrary, should conceive that there was no immediate communication between God and him, it would tend greatly to quell his holy motions of soul, and be an exceeding damage to his pleasure.

No good reason can be given why men should have such an in ward disposition to deny any immediate communication between God and the creature, or to make as little of it as possible. 'Tis a strange disposition that men have to thrust God out of the world, or to put Him as far out of sight as they can, and to have in no respect immediately and sensibly to do with Him. Therefore so many schemes have been drawn to exclude, or extenuate, or remove at a great distance, any influence of the Divine Being in the hearts of men, such as the scheme of the Pelagians, the Socinians, &c. And therefore these doctrines are so much ridiculed that

ascribe much to the immediate influence of the Spirit, and called enthusiasm, fanaticism, whimsy, and distraction; but no mortal can tell for what.

If we make no difficulty of allowing that God did immediately make the whole Universe at first, and caused it to exist out of nothing, and that every individual thing owes its being to an immediate voluntary, arbitrary act of Almighty power, why should we make a difficulty of supposing that He has still something immediately to do with the things that He has made, and that there is an arbitrary influence still that God has in tile Creation that He has made?

And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the Creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable creatures who are the highest part of the Creation, next to God, and who are most immediately made for God, and have Him for their next Head, and are created for the business wherein they are mostly concerned. And above all, in that wherein the highest excellency of this highest rank of beings consist, and that wherein he is most conformed to God is nearest to Him, and has God for his most immediate object.

It seems to me most rational to suppose that as we ascend in the order of being we shall at last come immediately to God, the First Cause. In whatever respect we ascend, we ascend in the order of time and succession.

II. The Scripture speaks of this holy and Divine principle in the heart as not only from the Spirit but as being spiritual. Thus saving knowledge is called spiritual understanding: Col 1:9 i. 9 —"We desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." So the influences, graces, and comforts of God's Spirit are called spiritual blessings: Eph. i. 3—" Blessed be the God and [father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." So the imparting of any gracious benefit is called the imparting of a spiritual gift: Rom. 1:11 "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." And the fruits of the Spirit, which are offered to God, are called spiritual

sacrifices: 1 Peter ii. 5—" A spiritual priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And a spiritual person signifies the same in Scripture as a gracious person and sometimes one that is much under the influence of grace: l Cor. ii. 15—"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;" and iii. 1 —" And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal." Gal. 5:1 1—"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." And to be graciously minded is called in Scripture a being spiritually minded: Rom. viii 6—" To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Concerning this, two things are to be noted.

1. That this Divine principle in the heart is not called spiritual, because it has its seat in the soul or spiritual part of man, and not in his body.It is called spiritual, not because of its relation to the spirit of man, in which it is, but because of its relation to the Spirit of God, from which it is. That things are not called spiritual because they appertain not to the body but the spirit of man is evident, because gracious or holy understanding is called spiritual understand in the forementioned passage, (Col. i. 9.) Now, by spiritual understanding cannot be meant that understanding which has its seat in the soul, to distinguish it from other understanding that has its seat in the body, for all understanding has its seat in the soul; and that things are called spiritual because of their relation to the Spirit of God is most plain, by the latter part of the 2nd chapter of 1st Corinthians. There we have both those expressions, one immediately after another, evidently meaning the same thing: verses 1:3, 14 "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." And that by the spiritual man is meant one that has the Spirit is also as plainly evident by the context: verses 10-12 " God hath revealed *them* unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man," &c. Also ver. 15 " He that is spiritual judgeth all things," by which is evidently meant the same as he that bath the Spirit that " searcheth all things," as we find in the foregoing verses. So persons are said to be

spiritually minded, not because they mind things that relate to the soul or spirit of man, but because they mind things that relate to the Spirit of God: Romans 8:5, 6-- "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

2. ***It must be observed that where this holy Divine principle of saving grace wrought in the mind is in Scripture called spiritual, what is intended by the expression is not merely nor chiefly that it is from the Spirit of God, but that it is of the nature of the Spirit of God.*** There are many things in the minds of some natural men that are from the influence of the Spirit, but yet are by no means spiritual things in the scriptural sense of the word. The Spirit of God convinces natural men of sin, (John 16:8.) Natural men may have common grace, common illuminations, and common affections that are from the Spirit of God, as appears by Hebrews 6:4. Natural men have sometimes the influences of the Spirit of God in His common operations and gifts, and therefore God's Spirit is said to be striving with them, and they are said to resist the Spirit, (Acts 7:51;) to grieve and vex God's Holy Spirit, (Eph. 4:30; Isaiah 63:10;) and God is said to depart from them even as the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul: 1 Sam. 16:14-- "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him."

But yet natural men are not in any degree spiritual. The great difference between natural men and godly men seems to be set forth by this, that the one is natural and carnal, and the other spiritual; and natural men are so totally destitute of that which is Spirit, that they know nothing about it, and the reason given for it is because they are not spiritual, (1 Cor. 2:13-15.) Indeed sometimes those miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were common are called spiritual because they are from the Spirit of God; but for the most part the term seems to be appropriate to its gracious influences and fruits on the soul, which are no otherwise spiritual than the common influences of the Spirit that natural men have, in any other respect than this, that this saving grace in the soul, is not only from the Spirit, but it also partakes of the nature of that Spirit that it is from,

which the common grace of the Spirit does not. Thus things in Scripture language are said to be earthly, as they partake of an earthly nature, partake of the nature of the earth; so things are said to be heavenly, as they in their nature agree with those things that are in heaven; and so saving grace in the heart is said to be spiritual, and therein distinguished from all other influences of the Spirit, that it is of the nature of the Spirit of God. It partakes of the nature of that Spirit, while no common gift of the Spirit doth so.

But here an enquiry may be raised, viz.:--

Enq. ***How does saving grace partake of the nature of that Spirit that it is from, so as to be called on that account spiritual, thus essentially distinguishing it from all other effects of the Spirit?*** for every effect has in some respect or another the nature of its cause, and the common convictions and illuminations that natural men have are in some respects [of] the nature of the Spirit of God; for there is light and understanding and conviction of truth in these common illuminations, and so they are of the nature of the Spirit of God--that is, a discerning spirit and a spirit of truth. But yet saving grace, by its being called spiritual, as though it were thereby distinguished from all other gifts of the Spirit, seems to partake of the nature of the Spirit of God in some very peculiar manner.

Clearly to satisfy this enquiry, we must do these two things:-- 1. We must bear in mind what has already been said of the nature of saving grace, and what I have already shewn to be that wherein its nature and essence lies, and wherein all saving grace is radically and summarily comprised viz., a principle of Divine Love. 2. We must consider what the Scripture reveals to be in a peculiar manner the nature of the Holy Spirit of God, and in an enquiry of this nature I would go no further than I think the Scripture plainly goes before me. The Word of God certainly should be our rule in matters so much above reason and our own notions.

And here I would say--

(1.) That I think ***the Scripture does sufficiently reveal the Holy Spirit as a proper Divine Person****;* and thus we ought to look upon

Him as a distinct personal agent. He is often spoken of as a person, revealed under personal characters and in personal acts, and it speaks of His being acted on as a person, and the Scripture plainly ascribes every thing to Him that properly denotes a distinct person; and though the word person be rarely used in the Scriptures, yet I believe that we have no word in the English language that does so naturally represent what the Scripture reveals of the distinction of the Eternal Three,--Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,--as to say they are one God but three persons.

(2.) ***Though all the Divine perfections are to be attributed to each person of the Trinity, yet the Holy Ghost is in a peculiar manner called by the name of Love*** --A)ga/ph, the same word is that translated charity in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. The Godhead or the Divine essence is once and again said to be Love: 1 John 4:8 -- "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." So again, ver. 16-- "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." But the Divine essence is thus called in a peculiar manner as breathed forth and subsisting in the Holy Spirit; as may be seen in the context of these texts, as in the 12th and 13th verses of the same chapter-- "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." It is the same argument in both these verses: in the 12th verse the apostle argues that if we have love dwelling in us, we have God dwelling in us; and in the 13th verse he clears the face of the argument by this, that his love which is dwelling in us is God's Spirit. And this shews that the foregoing argument is good, and that if love dwells in us, we know God dwells in us indeed, for the Apostle supposes it as a thing granted and allowed that God's Spirit is God. The Scripture elsewhere does abundantly teach us that the way in which God dwells in the saints is by His Spirit, by their being the temples of the Holy Ghost. Here this apostle teaches us the same thing. He says, "We know that he dwelleth in us, that he hath given us his Spirit;" and this is manifestly to explain what is said in the foregoing verse-- viz., that God dwells in us, inasmuch as His love dwells in us; which love he had told us before--ver. 8--is God himself. And afterwards, in the 16th verse, he expresses it more fully, that this is the way that God dwells in the saint-- viz.. because this love dwells in them, which is God.

Again the same is signified in the same manner in the last verses of the foregoing chapter. In the foregoing verses, speaking of love as a true sign of sincerity and our acceptance with God, beginning with the 18th verse, he sums up the argument thus in the last verse: "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

We have also something very much like this in the apostle Paul's writings.

Gal. 5:13-16-- "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Here it seems most evident that what the apostle exhorts and urges in the 13th, 14th, and 15th verses,-- viz., that they should walk in love, that they might not give occasion to the gratifying of the flesh,--he does expressly explain in the 16th verse by this, that they should walk in the Spirit, that they might not fulfil the lust of the flesh; which the great Mr Howe takes notice of in his "Sermons on the Prosperous State of the Christian Interest before the End of Time," p. 185, published by Mr Evans. His words are, "Walking in the Spirit is directed with a special eye and reference unto the exercise of this love; as you may see in Galatians 5, the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses compared together. All the law is fulfilled in one word, (he means the whole law of the second table,) even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, (the opposite to this love, or that which follows on the want of it, or from the opposite principle,) take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, (observe the inference,) Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the exercise of this love."

So that as the Son of God is spoken of as the wisdom, understanding, and Logos of God, (Proverbs 8; Luke 11:49; John 1, at the beginning,) and is, as divines express things, the personal wisdom of God; so the Spirit of God is spoken of as the love of God, and may with equal foundation and propriety be called the personal love of God. We read in the beloved disciple's writings of these two --Logos and A)ga/ph, both of which are said to be God, (John 1:1; 1 John 4:8-16.) One is the Son of God, and the

other the Holy Spirit. There are two things that God is said to be in this First Epistle of John--light and love: chap. 1:5--"God is light." This is the Son of God, who is said to be the wisdom and reason of God, and the brightness of His glory; and in the 4th chapter of the same epistle he says, "God is love," and this he applies to the Holy Spirit.

Hence the Scripture symbol of the Holy Ghost is a dove, which is the emblem of love, and so was continually accounted (as is well known) in the heathen world, and is so made use of by their poets and mythologists, which probably arose partly from the nature and manner of the bird, and probably in part from the tradition of the story of Noah's dove, that came with a message of peace and love after such terrible manifestations of God's wrath in the time of the deluge. This bird is also made use of as an emblem of love in the Holy Scriptures; as it was on that message of peace and love that God sent it to Noah, when it came with an olive-leaf in its mouth, and often in Solomon's Song: Cant. 1:15-- "Thou hast doves' eyes": Cant. 5:12-- "His eyes are as the eyes of doves:" Cant. 5:2-- "Open to me, my love, my dove," and in other places in that song.

This bird, God is pleased to choose as the special symbol of His Holy Spirit in the greatest office or work of the Spirit that ever it has or will exert--viz., in anointing Christ, the great Head of the whole Church of saints, from which Head this holy oil descends to all the members, and the skirts of His garments, as the sweet and precious ointment that was poured on Aaron's head, that great type of Christ. As God the Father then poured forth His Holy Spirit of love upon the Son without measure, so that which was then seen with the eye--viz., a dove descending and lighting upon Christ--signified the same thing as what was at the same time proclaimed to the Son--viz., This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This is the Son on whom I pour forth all my love, towards whom my essence entirely flows out in love. See Matt. 3:16,17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33.

This was the anointing of the Head of the Church and our great High Priest, and therefore the holy anointing oil of old with which Aaron and other typical high priests were anointed was the most eminent type of the Holy Spirit of any in the Old Testament. This holy oil, by reason of its soft-flowing and diffusive nature, and its unparalleled sweetness and

fragrancy, did most fitly represent Divine Love, or that Spirit that is the deity, breathed forth or flowing out and softly falling in infinite love and delight. It is mentioned as a fit representation of holy love, which is said to be like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. It was from the fruit of the olive-tree, which it is known has been made use of as a symbol of love or peace, which was probably taken from the olive-branch brought by the dove to Noah in token of the Divine favour; so that the olive-branch and the dove that brought it, both signified the same thing--viz., love, which is specially typified by the precious oil from the olive-tree.

God's love is primarily to Himself, and His infinite delight is in Himself, in the Father and the Son loving and delighting in each other. We often read of the Father loving the Son, and being well pleased in the Son, and of the Son loving the Father. In the infinite love and delight that is between these two persons consists the infinite happiness of God: Prov. 8:30.--"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" and therefore seeing the Scripture signifies that the Spirit of God is the Love of God, therefore it follows that Holy Spirit proceeds from or is breathed forth from, the Father and the Son in some way or other infinitely above all our conceptions, as the Divine essence entirely flows out and is breathed forth in infinitely pure love and sweet delight from the Father and the Son; and this is that pure river of water of life that proceeds out of the throne of the Father and the Son, as we read at the beginning of the 22nd chapter of the Revelation; for Christ himself tells us that by the water of life, or living water, is meant the Holy Ghost, (John 7:38, 39.) This river of water of life in the Revelation is evidently the same with the living waters of the sanctuary in Ezekiel, (Ezek. 47:1, etc.;) and this river is doubtless the river of God's pleasure, or of God's own infinite delight spoken of in Ps. 36:7-9-- "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life." The river of God's pleasures here spoken of is the same with the fountain of life spoken of in the next words. Here, as

was observed before, the water of life by Christ's own interpretation is the Holy Spirit. This river of God's pleasures is also the same with the fatness of God's house, the holy oil of the sanctuary spoken of in the next preceding words, and is the same with God's love, or God's excellent loving-kindness, spoken of in the next preceding verse.

I have before observed that the Scripture abundantly reveals that the way in which Christ dwells in the saint is by His Spirit's dwelling in them, and here I would observe that Christ in His prayer, in the 17th chapter of John, seems to speak of the way in which He dwells in them as by the indwelling of the love wherewith the Father has loved Him: John 17:26 "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." The beloved disciple that wrote this Gospel having taken [such] particular notice of this, that he afterwards in his first epistle once and again speaks of love's dwelling in the saints, and the Spirit's dwelling in them being the same thing.

Again, the Scripture seems in many places to speak of love in Christians as if it were the same with the Spirit of God in them, or at least as the prime and most natural breathing and acting of the Spirit in the soul. So Rom. 5:5-- "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us:" Col. 1:8-- "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit:" 2 Cor. 6:6-- "By kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned:" Phil. 2:1-- "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

The Scripture therefore leads us to this conclusion, though it be infinitely above us to conceive how it should be, that yet as the Son of God is the personal word, idea, or wisdom of God, begotten by God, being an infinitely perfect, substantial image or idea of Himself, (as might be very plainly proved from the Holy Scripture, if here were proper occasion for it;) so the Holy Spirit does in some ineffable and inconceivable manner proceed, and is breathed forth both from the Father and the Son, by the Divine essence being wholly poured and flowing out in that infinitely intense, holy, and pure love and delight that continually and

unchangeably breathes forth from the Father and the Son, primarily towards each other, and secondarily towards the creature. and so flowing forth in a different subsistence or person in a manner to us utterly inexplicable and inconceivable, and that this is that person that is poured forth into the hearts of angels and saints.

Hence 'tis to be accounted for, that though we often read in Scripture of the Father loving the Son, and the Son loving the Father, yet we never once read either of the Father or the Son loving the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit loving either of them. It is because the Holy Spirit is the Divine Love itself, the love of the Father and the Son. Hence also it is to be accounted for, that we very often read of the love both of the Father and the Son to men, and particularly their love to the saints; but we never read of the Holy Ghost loving them, for the Holy Ghost is that love of God and Christ that is breathed forth primarily towards each other, and flows out secondarily towards the creature. This also will well account for it, that the apostle Paul so often wishes grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, in the beginning of his epistles, without even mentioning the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost is Himself the love and grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the deity wholly breathed forth in infinite, substantial, intelligent love: from the Father and Son first towards each other, and secondarily freely flowing out to the creature, and so standing forth a distinct personal subsistence.

Both the holiness and happiness of the Godhead consists in this love. As we have already proved, all creature holiness consists essentially and summarily in love to God and love to other creatures; so does the holiness of God consist in His love, especially in the perfect and intimate union and love there is between the Father and the Son. But the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son is the bond of this union, as it is of all holy union between the Father and the Son, and between God and the creature, and between the creatures among themselves. All seems to be signified in Christ's prayer in the 17th chapter of John, from the 21st verse. Therefore this Spirit of love is the "bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14) throughout the whole blessed society or family in heaven and earth, consisting of the Father, the head of the family, and the Son, and all His

saints that are the disciples, seed, and spouse of the Son. The happiness of God doth also consist in this love; for doubtless the happiness of God consists in the infinite love He has to, and delight He has in Himself; or in other words, in the infinite delight there is between the Father and the Son, spoken of in Prov. 8:30. This delight that the Father and the Son have in each other is not to be distinguished from their love of complacence one in another, wherein love does most essentially consist, as was observed before. The happiness of the deity, as all other true happiness, consists in love and society.

Hence it is the Spirit of God, the third person in the Trinity, is so often called the Holy Spirit, as though "holy" were an epithet some way or other peculiarly belonging to Him, which can be no other way than that the holiness of God does consist in Him. He is not only infinitely holy as the Father and the Son are, but He is the holiness of God itself in the abstract. The holiness of the Father and the Son does consist in breathing forth this Spirit. Therefore He is not only called the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit of holiness: Rom. 1:4-- "According to the Spirit of holiness."

Hence also the river of "living waters," or waters of life, which Christ explains in the 7th [chapter] of John, of the Holy Spirit, is in the forementioned Psalm [36:8] called the "river of God's pleasures;" and hence also that holy oil with which Christ was anointed, which I have shewn was the Holy Ghost, is called the "oil of gladness": Heb. 1:9-- "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Hence we learn that God's fulness does consist in the Holy Spirit. By fulness, as the term is used in Scripture, as may easily be seen by looking over the texts that mention it, Is intended the good that any one possesses. Now the good that God possesses does most immediately consist in His joy and complacence that He has in Himself. It does objectively, indeed, consist in the Father and the Son; but it doth most immediately consist in the complacence in these elements. Nevertheless the fulness of God consists in the holiness and happiness of the deity. Hence persons, by being made partakers of the Holy Spirit, or having it dwelling in them, are said to be "partakers of the fulness of God" ar Christ. Christ's fulness, as mediator, consists in His having the Spirit given Him "not by measure," (John 3:34.) And so it is that He is said to

have "the fulness of the Godhead," [which] is said "to dwell in him bodily," (Col. 2:9.) And as we, by receiving the Holy Spirit from Christ, and being made partakers of His Spirit, are said "to receive of his fulness, and grace for grace." And because this Spirit, which is the fulness of God, consists in the love of God and Christ; therefore we, by knowing the love of Christ, are said "to be filled with all the fulness of God," (Eph. 3:19.) For the way that we know the love of Christ, is by having that love dwelling in us, as 1 John 4:13; because the fulness of God consists in the Holy Spirit. Hence our communion with God the Father and God the Son consists in our possessing of the Holy Ghost, which is their Spirit. For to have communion or fellowship with either, is to partake with Them of Their good in Their fulness in union and society with Them. Hence it is that we read of the saints having fellowship and communion with the Father and with the Son; but never of their having fellowship with the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost is that common good or fulness which they partake of in which their fellowship consists. We read of the communion of the Holy Ghost; but not of communion with Him, which are two very different things.

Persons are said to have communion with each other when they partake with each other in some common good; but any one is said to have communion of anything, with respect to that thing they partake of, in common with others. Hence, in the apostolical benediction, he wishes the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion or partaking of the Holy Ghost." The blessing wished is but one--viz., the Holy Spirit. To partake of the Holy Ghost is to have that love of the Father and the grace of the Son.

From what has been said, it follows that the Holy Spirit is the *summum* of all good. 'Tis the fulness of God. The holiness and happiness of the Godhead consists in it; and in communion or partaking of it consists all the true loveliness and happiness of the creature. All the grace and comfort that persons here have, and all their holiness and happiness hereafter, consists in the love of the Spirit, spoken of Rom. 15:30; and joy in the Holy Ghost, spoken of Rom. 14:17; Acts 9:31, 13:52. And, therefore, that which in Matt. 7:11-- "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in

heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?" is in Luke 11:13, expressed thus: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Doubtless there is an agreement in what is expressed by each Evangelist: and giving the Holy Spirit to them that ask, is the same as giving good things to them that ask; for the Holy Spirit is the sum of all good.

Hence we may better understand the economy of the persons of the Trinity as it appears in the part that each one has in the affair of redemption, and shews the equality of each Person concerned in that affair, and the equality of honour and praise due to each of Them. For that work, glory belongs to the Father and the Son, that They so greatly loved the world. To the Father, that He so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, who was all His delight, who is His infinite objective Happiness. To the Son, that He so loved the world, that He gave Himself. But there is equal glory due to the Holy Ghost on this account, because He is the Love of the Father and the Son, that flows out primarily towards God, and secondarily towards the elect that Christ came to save. So that, however wonderful the love of the Father and the Son appear to be, so much the more glory belongs to the Holy Spirit, in whom subsists that wonderful and excellent love.

It shews the infinite excellency of the Father thus:--That the Son so delighted in Him, and prized His honour and glory, that when He had a mind to save sinners, He came infinitely low, rather than men's salvation should be the injury of that honour and glory. It shewed the infinite excellency and worth of the Son, that the Father so delighted in Him, that for His sake He was ready to quit His own; yea, and receive into favour those that had deserved infinitely ill at His hands. Both shews the infinite excellency of the Holy Spirit, because He is that delight of the Father and the Son in each other, which is manifested to be so great and infinite by these things.

What has been said shews that our dependence is equally on each Person in this affair. The Father approves and provides the Redeemer, and Himself accepts the price of the good purchased, and bestows that good. The Son is the Redeemer, and the price that is offered for the purchased

good. And the Holy Ghost is the good purchased; [for] the Sacred Scriptures seem to intimate that the Holy Spirit is the sum of all that Christ purchased for man, (Gal. 3:13-14.)

What Christ purchased for us is, that we might have communion with God in His good, which consists in partaking or having communion of the Holy Ghost, as I have shewn. All the blessedness of the redeemed consists in partaking of the fulness of Christ, their Head and Redeemer, which, I have observed, consists in partaking of the Spirit that is given Him not by measure. This is the vital sap which the creatures derive from the true vine. This is the holy oil poured on the head, that goes down to the members. Christ purchased for us that we should enjoy the Love: but the love of God flows out in the proceeding of the Spirit; and He purchased for them that the love and joy of God should dwell in them, which is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The sum of all spiritual good which the saints have in this world, is that spring of living water within them which we read of, (John 4:10;) and those rivers of living waters flowing from within them which we read of, (John 7:38,39,) which we are there told is the Holy Spirit. And the sum of all happiness in the other world, is that river of living water which flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, which is the river of God's pleasures, and is the Holy Spirit, which is often compared in Sacred Scripture to water, to the rain and dew, and rivers and floods of waters, (Isa. 44:3; 32:15; 41:17,18, compared with John 4:14; Isa. 35:6,7; 43:19,20.)

The Holy Spirit is the purchased possession and inheritance of the saints, as appears, because that little of it which the saints have in this world is said to be the earnest of that purchased inheritance, (Eph. 1:13,14; 2 Cor. 1:22, v.5.) 'Tis an earnest of that which we are to have a fulness of hereafter. The Holy Ghost is the great subject of all gospel promises, and therefore is called the Spirit of promise, (Eph.1:13.) He is called the promise of the Father, (Luke 24:49.)

The Holy Ghost being a comprehension of all good things promised in the gospel, we may easily see the force of the Apostle's inquiry: Gal. 3:2-- "This only would I learn of you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the

Law, or by the hearing of faith? " So that in the offer of redemption 'tis of God of whom our good is purchased, and 'tis God that purchases it, and 'tis God also that is the thing purchased. Thus all our good things are of God, and through God, and in God, as Rom. 11:36-- "For of him, and through him, and to him, and in him, [as ei/V is rendered in 1 Cor. 8:6,] are all things: to whom be glory for ever."All our good is of God the Father, and through God the Son, and all is in the Holy Ghost, as He is Himself all our good. And so God is Himself the portion and purchased inheritance of His people. Thus God is the Alpha and Omega in this affair of Redemption.

If we suppose no more than used to be supposed about the Holy Ghost, the honour of the Holy Ghost in the work of Redemption is not equal in any sense to the Father and the Son's; nor is there an equal part of the glory of this work belonging to Him. Merely to apply to us, or immediately to give or hand to us blessing purchased, after it is purchased, is subordinate to the other two Persons,--is but a little thing to the purchaser of it by the paying an infinite price by Christ, by Christ's offering up Himself a sacrifice to procure it; and 'tis but a little thing to God the Father's giving His infinitely dear Son to be a sacrifice for us to procure this good. But according to what has now been supposed, there is an equality. To be the wonderful love of God, is as much as for the Father and the Son to exercise wonderful love; and to be the thing purchased, is as much as to be the price that purchases it. The price, and the thing bought with that price, answer each other in value; and to be the excellent benefit offered, is as much as to offer such an excellent benefit. For the glory that belongs to Him that bestows the gospel, arises from the excellency and value of the gift, and therefore the glory is equal to that excellency of the benefit. And so that Person that is that excellent benefit, has equal glory with Him that bestows such an excellent benefit.

But now to return: from what has been now observed from the Holy Scriptures of the nature of the Holy Spirit, may be clearly understood why grace in the hearts of the saints is called spiritual, in distinction from other things that are the effects of the Spirit in the hearts of men. For by this it appears that the Divine principle in the saints is of the nature of the Spirit; for as the nature of the Spirit of God is Divine Love, so Divine Love

is the nature and essence of that holy principle in the hearts of the saints.

The Spirit of God may operate and produce effects upon the minds of natural men that have no grace, as He does when He assists natural conscience and convictions of sin and danger. The Spirit of God may produce effects upon inanimate things, as of old He moved on the face of the waters. But He communicates holiness in His own proper nature only, in those holy effects in the hearts of the saints. And, therefore, those holy effects only are called spiritual; and the saints only are called spiritual persons in Sacred Scripture.

Men's natural faculties and principles may be assisted by the operation of the Spirit of God on their minds, to enable them to exert those acts which, to a greater or lesser degree, they exert naturally. But the Spirit don't at all communicate Himself in it in His own nature, which is Divine Love, any more than when He moved upon the face of the waters.

Hence also we may more easily receive and understand a doctrine that seems to be taught us in the Sacred Scripture concerning grace in the heart--viz., that it is no other than the Spirit of God itself dwelling and acting in the heart of a saint,-- which the consideration of these things will make manifest:--

(1.) That the Sacred Scriptures don't only call grace spiritual, but "spirit."

(2.) That when the Sacred Scriptures call grace spirit, the Spirit of God is intended; and that grace is called "Spirit" no otherwise than as the name of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person in the Trinity is ascribed to it.

1. This holy principle is often called by the name of "spirit" in Sacred Scripture. So in John 3:6-- "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Here by flesh and spirit, we have already shewn, are intended those two opposite principles in the heart, corruption and grace. So by flesh and spirit the same things are manifestly intended in Gal. 5:17-- "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the

things that ye would." This that is here given as the reason why Christians cannot do the things that they would, is manifestly the same that is given for the same thing in the latter part of the 7th chapter of the Romans. The reason there given why they cannot do the things that they would is, that the law of the members war with [and] against the law of the mind; and, therefore, by the law of the members and the law of the mind are meant the same as the flesh and Spirit in Galatians. Yea, they are called by the same name of the flesh and Spirit there, in that context, in the continuation of the same discourse in the beginning of the next chapter:-- "Therefore there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Here the Apostle evidently refers to the same two opposite principles warring one against another, that he had been speaking of in the close of the preceding chapter, which he here calls flesh and Spirit as he does in his Epistle to the Galatians.

This is yet more abundantly clear by the next words, which are, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Here these two things that in the preceding verse are called "flesh and spirit," are in this verse called "the law of the Spirit of life" and "the law of sin and death," evidently speaking still of the same law of our mind and the law of sin spoken of in the last verse of the preceding chapter. The Apostle goes on in the 8th chapter to call aversation and grace by the names of flesh and Spirit, (verses 4-9, and again verses 12,13.) These two principles are called by the same names in Matt. 26:41-- "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." There can be no doubt but that the same thing is intended here by the flesh and spirit as (compare what is said of the flesh and spirit here and in these places) in the 7th and 8th chapters of Romans, and Gal. 5. Again, these two principles are called by the same words in Gal. 6:8. If this be compared with the 18th verse of the foregoing chapter, and with Romans 8:6 and 13, none can doubt but the same is meant in each place.

2. If the Sacred Scriptures be duly observed, where grace is called by the name of "spirit," it will appear that 'tis so called by an ascription of the Holy Ghost, even the third person in the Trinity, to that Divine principle in the hearts of the saints,

as though that principle in them were no other than the Spirit of God itself, united to the soul, and living and acting in it, and exerting itself in the use and improvement of its faculties.

Thus it is in the 8th chapter of Romans, as does manifestly appear by verses 9-16-- "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you," etc. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," etc.

Here the apostle does fully explain himself what he means when he so often calls that holy principle that is in the hearts of the saints by the name "spirit." This he means, the Spirit of God itself dwelling and acting in them. In the 9th verse he calls it the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ in the 10th verse. He calls it Christ in them in the 11th verse. He calls it the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelling in them; and in the 14th verse he calls it the Spirit of God. In the 16th verse he calls it the Spirit itself. So it is called the Spirit of God in 1 Cor. 2:11,12. So that that holy, Divine principle, which we have observed does radically and essentially consist in Divine love, is no other than a communication and participation of that same infinite Divine Love, which is GOD, and in which the Godhead is eternally breathed forth; and subsists in the Third Person in the blessed Trinity. So that true saving grace is no other than that very love of God-- that is, God, in one of the persons of the Trinity, uniting Himself to the soul of a creature, as a vital principle, dwelling there and exerting Himself by the faculties of the soul of man, in His own proper nature, after the manner of a principle of nature.

And we may look back and more fully understand what the apostle John means when he says once and again, "God is Love," and "He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him," and "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us," and "His Love is perfected in us," [and] "Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

By this, also, we may understand what the apostle Peter means in his 2nd Epistle 1:4, that the saints are made "partakers of the Divine nature." They are not only partakers of a nature that may, in some sense, be called Divine, because 'tis conformed to the nature of God; but the very deity

does, in some sense, dwell in them. That holy and Divine Love dwells in their hearts, and is so united to human faculties, that 'tis itself become a principle of new nature. That love, which is the very native tongue and spirit of God, so dwells in their souls that it exerts itself in its own nature in the exercise of those faculties, after the manner of a natural or vital principle in them.

This shews us how the saints are said to be the "temples of the Holy Ghost" as they are.

By this, also, we may understand how the saints are said to be made "partakers of God's holiness," not only as they partake of holiness that God gives, but partake of that holiness by which He himself is holy. For it has been already observed, the holiness of God consists in that Divine Love in which the essence of God really flows out.

This also shews us how to understand our Lord when He speaks of His joy being fulfilled in the saints: John 17:13-- "And now I come unto thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." It is by the indwelling of that Divine Spirit, which we have shewn to be God the Father's and the Son's infinite Love and Joy in each other. In the 13th verse He says He has spoken His word to His disciples, "that His joy might be fulfilled;" and in verse 26th He says, "And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

And herein lies the mystery of the vital union that is between Christ and the soul of a believer, which orthodox divines speak so much of, Christ's love--that is, His Spirit is actually united to the faculties of their souls. So it properly lives, acts, and exerts its nature in the exercise of their faculties. By this Love being in them, He is in them, (John 17:26;) and so it is said, 1 Cor. 6:17-- "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

And thus it is that the saints are said to live, "yet not they, but Christ lives in them," (Gal. 2:20.) The very promise of spiritual life in their souls is no other than the Spirit of Christ himself. So that they live by His life, as much as the members of the body live by the life of the Lord, and as much as the branches live by the life of the root and stock. "Because I live, ye

shall live also," (John 14:19.) "We are dead: but our life is hid with Christ in God," (Col. 3:3.) "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear," (Col 3:4.)

There is a union with Christ, by the indwelling of the Love of Christ, two ways. First, as 'tis from Christ, and is the very Spirit and life and fulness of Christ; and second, as it acts to Christ. For the very nature of it is love and union of heart to Him.

Because the Spirit of God dwells as a vital principle or a principle of new life in the soul, therefore 'tis called the "Spirit of life," (Rom. 8:2;) and the Spirit that "quickens." (John 6:63.)

The Spirit of God is a vital principle in the soul, as the breath of life is in the body: Ezek. 37:5--"Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live;" and so verses 9,10...

That principle of grace that is in the hearts of the saints is as much a proper communication or participation of the Spirit of God, the Third Person in the Trinity, as that breath that entered into these bodies is represented to be a participation of the wind that blew upon them. The prophet says, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live," is now the very same wind and the same breath; but only was wanted to these bodies to be a vital principle in them, which otherwise would be dead. And therefore Christ himself represents the communication of His Spirit to His disciples by His breathing upon them, and communicating to them His breath, (John 20:22.)

We often, in our common language about things of this nature, speak of a principle of grace. I suppose there is no other principle of grace in the soul than the very Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul and acting there as a vital principle. To speak of a habit of grace as a natural disposition to act grace, as begotten in the soul by the first communication of Divine light, and as the natural and necessary consequence of the first light, it seems in some respects to carry a wrong idea with it. Indeed the first exercise of grace in the first light has a tendency to future acts, as from an abiding principle, by grace and by the covenant of God; but not by any natural force. The giving one gracious discovery or act of grace, or a thousand,

has no proper natural tendency to cause an abiding habit of grace for the future; nor any otherwise than by Divine constitution and covenant. But all succeeding acts of grace must be as immediately, and, to all intents and purposes, as much from the immediate acting of the Spirit of God on the soul, as the first; and if God should take away His Spirit out of the soul-- all habits and acts of grace would of themselves cease as immediately as light ceases in a room when a candle is carried out. And no man has a habit of grace dwelling in him any otherwise than as he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him in his temple, and acting in union with his natural faculties, after the manner of a vital principle. So that when they act grace, 'tis, in the language of the apostle, "not they, but Christ living in them." Indeed the Spirit of God, united to human faculties, acts very much after the manner of a natural principle or habit. So that one act makes way for another, and so it now settles the soul in a disposition to holy acts; but that it does, so as by grace and covenant, and not from any natural necessity.

Hence the Spirit of God seems in Sacred Scripture to be spoken of as a quality of the persons in whom it resided. So that they are called spiritual persons; as when we say a virtuous man, we speak of virtue as the quality of the man. 'Tis the Spirit itself that is the only principle of true virtue in the heart. So that to be truly virtuous is the same as to be spiritual.

And thus it is not only with respect to the virtue that is in the hearts of the saints on earth, but also the perfect virtue and holiness of the saints in heaven. It consists altogether in the indwelling and acting of the Spirit of God in their habits. And so it was with man before the Fall; and so it is with the elect, sinless angels. We have shewn that the holiness and happiness of God consist in the Holy Spirit; and so the holiness and happiness of every holy or truly virtuous creature of God, in heaven or earth, consist in the communion of the same Spirit.

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Glorious Grace

"And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting, crying, grace, grace!"—Zachariah 4:7

The mercy of God is that attribute which we, the fallen, sinful race of Adam, stand in greatest need of, and God has been pleased, according to our needs, more gloriously to manifest this attribute than any other. The wonders of divine grace are the greatest of all wonders. The wonders of divine power and wisdom in the making [of] this great world are marvelous; other wonders of his justice in punishing sin are wonderful; many wonderful things have happened since the creation of the world, but none like the wonders of grace. "Grace, grace!" is the sound that the gospel rings with, "Grace, grace!" will be that shout which will ring in heaven forever; and perhaps what the angels sung at the birth of Christ, of God's good will towards men, is the highest theme that ever they entered upon.

In order to understand the words of our text, we are to take notice that the scope and design of the chapter is to comfort and encourage the children of Israel, returned out of their Babylonish captivity, in the building of Jerusalem and the temple: who it seems were very much disheartened by reason of the opposition they met with in the work, and the want of [the] external glory of the former temple before the captivity, so that the priests and the Levites, and the chief of the fathers, wept aloud as the rest shouted at the sight, as you may see in Ezra 3: 12, "But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy." You may see a full account of their great oppositions and discouragement's in the fourth and fifth chapters.

The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, were sent on this occasion to comfort them under those discouragement's. by foretelling the glories of the gospel should be displayed in this latter house, which should render the glories of it far beyond the glories of the former, notwithstanding it

was so far exceeded in what is external. In Hag. 2:39,

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I ; am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit .; remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, i and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

See also, in the third chapter of this book, at the eighth verse, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at; for behold, I will bring forth my servant, the Branch." And the same subject is continued in [his chapter, even the glorious grace of the gospel, which was to be manifested by Christ in this temple, particularly in our text, "and they shall bring forth the headstone with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." The headstone is that which entirely crowns and finishes the whole work, signifying that the entire gospel dispensation was to be finished in mere grace.

This stone was to [be] brought with repeated shouting or rejoicings at the grace of God, signifying the admirableness and gloriousness of this grace.

DOCTRINE.

The gospel dispensation is finished wholly and entirely in free and glorious grace: there is glorious grace, shines in every part of the great work of redemption; the foundation is laid in grace, the superstructure is reared in grace, and the whole is finished in glorious grace.

If Adam had stood and persevered in obedience, he would have been

made happy by mere bounty [and] goodness; for God was not obliged to reward Adam for his perfect obedience any otherwise than by covenant, for Adam by standing would not have merited happiness. But yet this grace would not have been such as the grace of the gospel, for he would have been saved upon the account of what he himself did, but the salvation of the gospel is given altogether freely. Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."

That we may give you as full explication of this doctrine as we can in a little space, we shall first, show free grace shines forth in the distinct parts of this wondrous work of redemption; second, speak a little of the gloriousness of this grace.

I. But as to the first, every part of this work was performed of mere grace.

First. It was of free grace that God had any thoughts or designs of rescuing mankind after the fall. If there had not been an immense fountain of goodness in God, he would never have entertained any thoughts at all of ever redeeming us after our defection. Man was happy enough at first, and might have continued so to all eternity, if he would; he was not compelled to fall. If he had not willfully and sinfully rebelled against God, he would never have been driven forth like an unworthy wretch, as he was. But although God had been so overflowing in his bounty to him as to make him head over the lower creation and ruler of all other creatures, and had planted a garden on purpose for his delight, and would have fixed him in an eternal happiness only on the reasonable condition of his obeying the easy commands of his maker; but yet notwithstanding all, he rebelled and turned over, from God to the devil, out of a wicked ambition of being a god himself not content in that happy state that he was in as man and so rebelled against God's authority.

Now who but God of boundless grace, would not have been provoked, after this, to leave him as he was, in the miserable state into which he had brought himself by his disobedience; resolving to help him no more, leaving him to himself and to the punishment he had deserved, leaving him in the devil's hands where he had thrown himself, not being contented in the arms of his Creator; who, but one of boundless grace,

would ever have entertained any thoughts of finding out a way for his recovery?

God had no manner of need of us, or of our praises. He has enough in himself for himself, and neither needs nor desires any additions of happiness, and if he did need the worship of his creatures, he had thousands and tenthousands of angels, and if he had not enough, he could create more; or, he could have glorified his justice in man's eternal destruction and ruin, and have with infinite ease created other beings, more perfect and glorious than man, eternally to sing his praises.

Second. But especially was it of rich and boundless grace that he gave his only Son for our restoration. By our fall, we are cast down so low into sin and misery, so deeply plunged into a most miserable and sinful condition, that it may truly be said, although all things are infinitely easy to God with respect to his omnipotency, yet with respect God's holiness and justice, God himself could not redeem us with a great deal of cost, no, not without infinite costs; that is, not without the presence of that, that is of infinite worth and value, even he blood of his Son, and in proper speaking, the blood of God, of divine person.

This was absolutely necessary in order to our redemption, because here was no other way of satisfying God's justice. When we were alien, it was come to this: either we must die eternally, or the Son of God must spill his blood; either we, or God's own Son must suffer God's wrath, one of the two; either miserable worms of the dust that had deserved it, or the glorious, amiable, beautiful, and innocent Son of God. The fall of man brought it to this; it must be determined one way or t'other and it was determined, by the strangely free and boundless grace of God, that this his own Son, should die that the offending worms might be freed, and set at liberty from their punishment, and that justice might make them happy. Here is grace indeed; well may we shout, "Grace, grace!" at this.

The heathens used to reckon that an only son slain in sacrifice was the greatest gift that could be offered to the gods. It was that, that they used sometimes to offer in times of great distress, and in some parts of the world it is constantly at this day performed. But we have stranger thing than that declared to us in the gospel; not that men sacrificed their only

sons to God, but that God gave his only Son to be slain, a sacrifice for man. God once commanded Abraham to offer his only son to him, and perhaps the faith and love of Abraham may be looked upon as wonderful, that he was willing to perform it- there are few that would do it in these days but if you wonder at that, how wonderful is it that, instead of Abraham's offering his only son to God, God should give his only Son to be offered for Abraham, and for every child of Abraham. Certainly, you will acknowledge this to be a wonder not to be paralleled.

And beside, God did not do this for friends, but for enemies and haters of him. He did not do it for loyal subjects, but for rebels; he did not do it for those that were his children, but for the children of the devil; he did not do it for those that were excellent, but for those that were more hateful than toads or vipers; he did not do it for those that could be any way profitable or advantageous to him, but for those that were so weak, that instead of profiting God, they were not able in the least to help themselves.

God has given even fallen man such a gift, that He has left nothing for man to do that he may be happy, but only to receive what is given him. Though he has sinned, yet God requires no amends to be made by him; He requires of him no restoration; if they will receive His Son of Him, He requires neither money nor price; he is to do no penance in order to be forgiven. What God offers, He offers freely. God offers man eternal happiness upon far more gracious terms since he is fallen than before; before, he was to do something himself for his happiness; he was to obey the law: but since he is fallen, God offers to save him for nothing, only if he will receive salvation as it is offered; that is, freely through Christ, by faith in Him.

Third. It was of mere grace that the Son was so freely willing to undertake our salvation. How cheerfully, yea how joyfully, did he undertake it, although he himself was the very person that was to suffer for man. Though He himself was to bear his sin and be made sin for him, yet how cheerfully cloth He speak: Ps. 40:78, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O Cod." He says, in Prov. 8:31, that his "delights were with the sons of men," for so did he love them that it seems he himself was willing to die in their room, rather than

that they should be miserable. He freely undertook this out of mere love and pity, for he never was and never will be, repaid by them for his blood. 'Twas on that we might be happy.'

Fourth. The application of the redemption of the gospel, by the Holy Spirit, is of mere grace. Although God the Father has provide a savior for us, and Christ has come and died, and there is nothing wanting but our willing and hearty reception of Christ; yet we shall

eternally perish yet, if God is not gracious to us, and don't make application of Christ's benefits to our souls. We are dependent on free grace, even for ability to lay hold in Christ already offered, so entirely is the gospel dispensation of mere grace. Eph. 2:810, "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." That is, we shall [be saved] freely and for nothing if we will but accept of Christ, but we are not able to do that of ourselves, but it is the free gift of God: "not of works, lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

II. We shall briefly speak to the gloriousness of this grace. As the grace of the gospel is altogether free, so it is glorious; the angels stoop down, with eyes full of wonder and joy, to look into, and shout for gladness and admiration, at the sight of it. How did the multitudes of heavenly hosts shout at the birth of Christ, crying, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good will towards men!" Well may the topstone of this house be brought forth with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace!" to it.

All the attributes of God, do illustriously shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ: his wisdom in so contriving his power in conquering death and the devil, and the hard and rocky hearts of depraved men; his justice in punishing sins of men rather upon his own dear Son, than let it go unpunished; but more especially, [in] his grace, that sweet attribute, he has magnified his mercy above all his names.

The grace of God, exhibited in the gospel, is glorious,

First. Because of the greatness of it. Every circumstance of the gospel,

grace surprisingly heightens it; let us look on what part we will, we shall see enough to fill us and all the angels in heaven with admiration forever. If we consider it as the grace of God the Father, and consider his greatness, his holiness, his power and justice, immensity and eternity; if we diligently consider how great a being he is, who took such pity and compassion on mankind, it is enough to astonish us. Or, if we consider ourselves, on whom this great God has bestowed this grace, we are nothing but worms, yea less than worms, before God; and not only so, but sinful worms, worms swollen with enmity against God. If we consider him by whom we receive [grace], the Son of God who made heaven and, by his almighty power, [is] equal with the Father; if we consider the greatness of what he did- he died most ignominiously and painfully in our nature it all infinitely heightens the grace of the gospel.

Second. Because of the glorious fruit of this. No less than salvation and eternal glory are the fruits of this grace of the gospel; adoption, union with Christ, communion with God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly happiness, the pleasure of the eternal paradise, the new Jerusalem, the glorious and triumphant resurrection of the body, and an everlasting reign with Christ in the height of glory, and pleasure and happiness: no less than these things are the effects of this marvelous grace.

What a vast difference is there between a poor, miserable sinner, full of sin, condemned to hellfire, and, a saint shining forth in robes of glory, and crowned with a crown of victory and triumph; but 'tis no less difference than this, is made in the same man by the grace of God in Christ.

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we learn, how they dishonor God and the gospel, who depend on anything else but mere grace. The gospel is far the most glorious manifestation of God's glory that ever was made to man, and the glory of the gospel is free grace and mere mercy. Now those that will not depend on this free grace, they do what they can to deprive the gospel of this glory, and sully the glory of God therein shining forth; they take away the praise, glory, and honor, that is due to God by his free grace and mercy to

men, and set up themselves as the objects of it, as if their salvation at least partly, was owing to what' they have done.

This must needs be very provoking and highly affronting to God: For miserable sinners, after they are fallen into such a miserable estate that it is impossible they should be saved by any other means than pure grace, and God is so gloriously rich in his goodness, as to offer this free grace unto them out of pity to them: how provoking must it be to God for these miserable, helpless wretches to attribute any of their salvation to themselves!

It is not an opportunity to buy and procure our own salvation that God offers, but an opportunity to lay hold on that salvation which is already bought and procured for us; neither are we able to [do] this of ourselves, it is the gift of God.

There are some, that hope to be saved quite in another way than ever the gospel proposed; that is, by their own righteousness, by being so good and doing so well, as that God shall take their goodness as sufficient to counterbalance their sin, that they have committed, and thereby they make their own goodness to equal value with Christ's blood. This conceit is very apt to creep into the proud heart of man.

Some openly profess to be able to merit salvation, as papists. Others hold that they are able to prepare and fit themselves for salvation already merited, or at least are able to do something towards it of themselves, and it is to be feared that many that don't openly profess either their own righteousness or their own strength, do very much depend upon both. By this doctrine, how much they dishonor the free grace of the gospel!

II. Let all be exhorted to accept the grace of the gospel. One would think, that there should be no need of such exhortations as this, but alas, such is the dreadful wickedness and the horrible ingratitude of man's heart, that he needs abundance of persuading and entreating to accept of God's kindness, when offered them. We should count it horrible ingratitude in a poor, necessitous creature, to refuse our help and kindness when we, out of mere pity to him, offer to relieve and help him. If you should see a man in extremity of distress, and in a perishing necessity of help and relief,

and you should lay out yourself, with much labor and cost, out of compassion to him, that he might be relieved, how would you take it of him, if he should proudly and spitefully refuse it and snuff at it, instead of thanking you for it? Would you not look upon it as a very ungrateful, unreasonable, base thing? And why has not God a thousand times the cause, to look upon you as base and ungrateful, if you refuse his glorious grace in the gospel, that he offers you? When God saw mankind in a most necessitous condition, in the greatest and extremist distress, being exposed to hellfire and eternal death, from which it was impossible he should ever deliver himself, or that ever he should be delivered by any other means, He took pity on them, and brought them from the jaws of destruction by His own blood. Now what hat great ingratitude is it for them to refuse such grace as this?

But so it is: multitudes will not accept a free gift at the hands of the King of the World. They have the daring, horrible presumption as [to] refuse a kindness offered by God himself, and not to accept a gift at the hands of Jehovah, nor not his own Son, his own Son equal with himself. Yea, they'll not accept of him, though he dies for them; yea, though he dies a most tormenting death, though he dies that they may be delivered from hell, and that they may have heaven**,** they'll not accept of this gift, though they are in such necessity of it, that they must be miserable forever without it. Yea, although God the Father invites and importunes them, they'll not accept of it, though the Son of God himself knocks and calls at their door till his head is wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, arguing and pleading with them to accept of him for their own sakes, though he makes so many glorious promises, though he holds forth so many precious benefits to tempt them to happiness, perhaps for many years together, yet they obstinately refuse all. Was ever such ingratitude heard of, or can greater be conceived of?

What would you have God do for you, that you may accept of it? Is the gift that he offers too small, that you think it too little, for you to accept of ? Don't Cod offer you his Son, and what could Cod offer more? Yea, we may say God himself has not a greater gift to offer. Did not the Son of God do enough for you, that you won't accept of, him; did he [not] die, and what could he do more? Yea, we may say that the Son of God could not do a

greater thing for man. Do you refuse because you want to be invited and wooed? You may hear him, from day to day, inviting of you, if you will but hearken. Or is it because you don't stand in need of God's grace? Don't you need it so much as that you must either receive it or be damned to all eternity, and what greater need can there possibly be?

Alas, miserable creatures that we are, instead of the gift of God offered in the gospel's not being great enough for us, we are not worthy of anything at all: we are less than the least of all God's mercies. Instead of deserving the dying Son of God, we are not worthy of the least crumb of bread, the least drop of water, or the least ray of light; instead of Christ's not having done enough for us by dying, in such pain and ignominy, we are not worthy that he should so much as look on us, instead of shedding his blood. We are not worthy that Christ should once make an offer of the least benefit, instead of his so long urging of us to be eternally happy.

Whoever continues to refuse Christ, will find hereafter, that instead of his having no need of him, that the least drop of his blood would have been more worth to them, than all the world; wherefore, let none be so ungrateful to God and so unwise for themselves, as to refuse the glorious grace of the gospel.

III. Let those who have been made partakers of this free and glorious grace of God, spend their lives much in praises and hallelujahs to God, for the wonders of his mercy in their redemption. To you, O redeemed of the Lord, cloth this doctrine most directly apply itself; you are those who have been made partakers of all this glorious grace of which you have now heard. 'Tis you that God entertained thoughts of restoring after your miserable fall into dreadful depravity and corruption, and into danger of the dreadful misery that unavoidably follows upon it; 'tis for you in particular that God gave his Son, yea, his only Son, and sent him into the world; 'tis for you that the Son of God so freely gave himself; 'tis for you that he was born, died, rose again and ascended, and intercedes; 'tis to you that there the free application of the fruit of these things is made: all this is done perfectly and altogether freely, without any of your desert, without any of your righteousness or strength; wherefore, let your life be spent in praises to God. When you praise him in prayer, let it not be with coldness and indifferency; when you praise him in your closet, let your

whole soul be active therein; when you praise him in singing, don't barely make a noise, without any stirring of affection in the heart, without any internal melody. Surely, you have reason to shout, cry, "Grace, grace, be the topstone of the temple!" Certainly, you don't want mercy and bounty to praise God; you only want a heart and lively affections to praise him with.

Surely, if the angels are so astonished at God's mercy to you, and do even shout with joy and admiration at the sight of God's grace to you, you yourself, on whom this grace is bestowed, have much more reason to shout.

Consider that great part of your happiness in heaven, to all eternity, will consist in this: in praising of God, for his free and glorious grace in redeeming you; and if you would spend more time about it on earth, you would find this world would be much more of a heaven to you than it is. Wherefore, do nothing while you are alive, but speak and think and live God's praises.

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The Pure in Heart Blessed

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." **-- Matthew 5:8**

Subject: I. Prop. That it is a thing truly happifying to the soul of man to see God. II. Prop. That the having a pure heart is the certain and only way to come to the blessedness of seeing God.

God formerly delivered his law from mount Sinai by an audible voice, with the sound of a trumpet, with the appearance of devouring fire, with thunders, and lightnings, and earthquakes. But the principal discoveries of God’s Word and will to mankind were reserved to be given by Jesus

Christ, his own Son, and the Redeemer of men, who is the light of the world.

In this sermon of Christ, of which the text is a part, we hear him delivering the mind of God also from a mountain. Here is God speaking, as well as from mount Sinai, and as immediately, but after a very different manner. There God spake by a preternatural formation of sounds in the air. Here he becomes incarnate, takes on him our nature, and speaks, and converses with us, not in a preternatural, awful, and terrible manner, but familiarly as one of us. His face was beheld freely by all that were about him. His voice was human, without those terrors which made the children of Israel desire that God might speak to them immediately no more. And the revelation which he makes of God's Word is more clear and perfect, and fuller of the discoveries of spiritual duties, of the spiritual nature of the command of God, of our spiritual and true happiness, and of mercy and grace to mankind. John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

This discourse of Christ on the mount seems principally leveled against the false notions, and carnal prejudices, that were at that day embraced by the nation of the Jews. And those benedictions, which we have in the beginning of his sermon, were sayings that were mere paradoxes to them, wholly contrary to the notions which they had received. That he, who was poor in spirit, was blessed, was a doctrine contrary to the received opinion of the world, and especially of that nation, who were exceedingly ambitious of the praise of men, and highly conceited of their own righteousness. And that he was a blessed and happy man, who mourned for sin, and lived mortified to the pleasures and vanities of the world, was contrary to their notions, who placed their highest happiness in worldly and carnal things. So also that they who were meek were blessed, was another doctrine very contrary to their notions, who were a very haughty, proud nation, and very revengeful, and maintained the lawfulness of private revenge, as may be seen in the 38th verse. Equally strange to them was the declaration that they who hungered and thirsted after righteousness were happy. For they placed their happiness, not in possessing a high degree of righteousness, but in having a great share of worldly good. They were wont to labor for the meat that perisheth. They

had no notion of any such thing as spiritual riches, or of happiness in satisfying a spiritual appetite. The Jews were dreadfully in the dark at that day about spiritual things. The happiness which they expected by the Messiah was a temporal and carnal, and not a spiritual, happiness. Christ also tells them that they were blessed who were merciful and who were peacemakers, which was also a doctrine that the Jews especially stood in need of at that day, for they were generally of a cruel, unmerciful, persecuting spirit.

The truth which Christ teaches them in the text, that they were blessed who were pure in heart, was a thing wholly beyond their conceptions. The Jews at this time placed almost the whole of religion in external things, in a conformity to the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses. They laid great stress on tithing mint, and anise, and cumin, and on their traditions, as in washing hands before meat and the like. But they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and especially such as respected holiness of heart. They took much more care to have clean hands, and a clean outside, than a clean heart, as Christ tells them, Mat. 23:25, 27, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within ye are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

We may observe concerning the words of the text,

I. That Christ pronounces the pure in heart, blessed. Christ here accommodates his instructions to the human nature. He knew that all mankind were in the pursuit of happiness, he has directed them in the true way to it, and he tells them what they must become in order to be blessed and happy.

II. He gives the reason why such are blessed, or wherein the blessedness of such consists, that they shall see God. It is probable the Jews supposed that it was a great privilege to see God, from those passages in the law, where there is an account of Moses's earnestly desiring to see God's glory; and from the account that is given of the seventy elders. Exo. 24:9, 10, 11, "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his

feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

It is also probable that they had very imperfect notions of what the vision of God was, and of the happiness that consisted in it, and that their notion of this matter, agreeably to the rest of their carnal, childish notions, was of some outwardly splendid and glorious sight, to please the eye and to entertain the fancy.

From these words I shall derive two propositions.

First, it is a truly blessed thing to the soul of man to see God.

Second, to be pure in heart, is the certain and only way to attain to this blessedness.

First, it is a truly blessed thing to the soul of man to see God. Here I shall attempt to show,

1. What is meant by seeing God.

(1.) It is not any sight with the bodily eyes. The blessedness of the soul does not enter in at that door. This would make the blessedness of the soul dependent on the body, or the happiness of man's superior part dependent on the inferior. And this would have confirmed the carnal and childish notions of the Jews.

God is a spirit, and is not to be seen with the bodily eyes. We find it attributed to God that he is invisible. Heb. 11:27, "As seeing him, who is invisible." Col. 1:15, "Who is the image of the invisible God." It is mentioned as a part of God's glory. 1 Tim. 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." That it is not any sight with the bodily eyes is evident because the unembodied souls of the saints see God, and the angels also, who are spirits and were never united to bodies. Mat. 18:10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which

is in heaven."

It is not any form or visible representation, nor shape, nor color, nor shining light, that is seen, wherein this great happiness of the soul consists. Indeed God was wont to manifest himself of old in outward glorious appearances. There was a shining light that was called the glory of the Lord. Thus the glory of the Lord was said to descend on mount Sinai, and in the tabernacle of the congregation. There was an outward visible token of God's presence, and the seventy elders, when they saw God in the mount, saw a visible shape. It seems also that when Moses desired to see God's glory, and when God passed by and covered him with his hand in the cleft of the rock, that Moses saw some visible glory. Exo. 33:18-23, "And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." But it seems that God then condescended to the infant state of the church, and to the childish notions that were entertained in those days of lesser light; and Moses's request seems to have been answered, by God making his goodness to pass before him, and proclaiming his name, and giving him a strong apprehension of the things contained in that name, rather than by showing him any outward glory.

The saints in heaven will behold an outward glory as they are in the human nature of Christ, which is united to the Godhead, as it is the body of that person who is God; and there will doubtless be appearances of a divine and inimitable glory and beauty in Christ's glorified body, which it will indeed be a refreshing and blessed sight to see.

But the beauty of Christ's body as seen by the bodily eyes, will be ravishing and delightful, chiefly as it will express his spiritual glory. The majesty that will appear in Christ's body, will express and show forth the spiritual greatness and majesty of the divine nature. The pureness and beauty of that light and glory will express the perfection of the divine holiness. The sweetness and ravishing mildness of his countenance will express his divine and spiritual love and grace.

Thus it was when the three disciples beheld Christ at his transfiguration upon the mount. They beheld a wonderful outward glory in Christ's body, an inexpressible beauty in his countenance. But that outward glory and beauty delighted them principally as an expression of the divine excellencies of his mind, as we may see from their manner of speaking of it. It was the sweet mixture of majesty and grace in his countenance, by which they were ravished. 2 Pet. 1:16, 17, 18, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." But especially from the account which John gives of it. John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth;" where John very probably had in his mind what he had seen in the mount at the transfiguration. Grace and truth are not outward, but spiritual, glories.

(2.) It is an intellectual view by which God is seen. God is a spiritual being, and he is beheld with the understanding. The soul has in itself those powers which are capable of apprehending objects, and especially spiritual objects, without looking through the windows of the outward senses. This is a more perfect way of perception than by the eyes of the body. We are so accustomed and habituated to depend upon our senses, and our intellectual powers are so neglected and disused, that we are ready to conceive that seeing things with the bodily eyes is the most perfect way of apprehending them. But it is not so. The eye of the soul is vastly more perfect than the eye of the body. Yet it is not every apprehension of God by the understanding that may be called the seeing of him. As,

1st. The having an apprehension of God merely by hearsay. If we hear of such a being as God, are educated in the belief that there is such a being, are told what sort of being he is, and what he has done, and are rightly told, and we give credit to what we hear, yet if we have no apprehension of God in any other way, we cannot be said to see God in the sense of the text. This is not the beatific sight of God.

2d. If we have an apprehension of God merely by speculative reasoning. If we come to some apprehension of God's being, and of his being almighty, all-wise, and good, by ratiocination, that is not what the Scripture calls seeing God. It is some more immediate way of understanding and viewing that is called sight. Nor will such an apprehension as this merely ever make the soul truly blessed. Nor,

3d. Is every more immediate and sensible apprehension of God, that seeing of him mentioned in the text, and that which is truly beatific. The wicked spirits in the other world have doubtless more immediate apprehensions of the being of God, and of his power and wrath, than the wicked in this world. They stand before God to be judged, they receive the sentence from him, they have a dreadful apprehension of his wrath and displeasure. But yet they are exceedingly remote from seeing God, in the sense of the text.

But to see God is this. It is to have an immediate, sensible, and certain understanding of God's glorious excellency and love.

1st. There must be a *direct* and *immediate* sense of God's glory and excellency. I say direct and immediate, to distinguish it from a mere perception that God is glorious and excellent by means of speculative and distant argumentation, which is a more indirect way of apprehending things. A true sense of the glory of God is that which can never be obtained by speculative ratiocination. And if men convince themselves by argument that God is holy, that never will give a sense of his amiable and glorious holiness. If they argue that he is very merciful, that will not give a sense of his glorious grace and mercy. It must be a more immediate, sensible discovery that must give the mind a real sense of the excellency and beauty of God. He that sees God, has a direct and immediate view of God's great and awful majesty, of his pure and beauteous holiness, of his wonderful and endearing grace and mercy.

2d. There is a certain understanding of his love, there is a certain apprehension of his presence. He that beholds God, does not merely see him as present by his essence, for so he is present with all, both godly and ungodly. But he is more especially present with those whom he loves, he is graciously present with them. And when they see him, they see him and

know him to be so. They have an understanding of his love to them. They see him from love manifesting himself to them. He that has a blessed-making sight of God, not only has a view of God's glory and excellency, but he views it as having a property in it. He sees God's love to him. He receives the testimonies and manifestations of that love.

God's favor is sometimes in Scripture called his face. Psa. 119:58, where it is translated, "I entreated *thy favour* with my whole heart;" it is in the original "*thy face*;" and God's *hiding his face*, is a very common expression to signify his withholding the testimonies of his favor.

To see God, as in the text, implies the sight of him as glorious and as gracious, a vision of the light of his countenance, both as it is understood of the effulgence of his glory, and the manifestations of his favor and love.

The discoveries which the saints have in this world of the glory and love of God are often in Scripture called the sight of God. Thus it is said of Abraham, that he saw him who is invisible. Heb. 11:27. So the saints are said to see as in a glass the glory of the Lord. 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Christ speaks of the spiritual knowledge of God. John 14:7, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." The saints in this world have an earnest of what is future, they have the dawnings of future light.

But the more perfect view which the saints have of God's glory and love in another world, is what is especially called the seeing of God. Then they shall see him as he is. That light which now is but a glimmering will be brought to clear sunshine. That which is here but the dawning, will become perfect day.

Those intellectual views which will be granted in another world are called seeing God.

1st. Because the view will be very direct, as when we see things with the bodily eyes. God will, as it were, immediately discover himself to their minds, so that the understanding shall behold the glory and love of God,

as a man beholds the countenance of his friend. The discoveries which the saints here have of God's excellency and grace are immediate in a sense. That is, they do not mainly consist in ratiocination. But yet in another sense they are indirect. That is, they are by means of the gospel, as through a glass. But in heaven God will immediately excite apprehensions of himself, without the use of any such means.

2d. It is called seeing because it will be most certain. When persons see a thing with their own eyes, it gives them the greatest certainty they can have of it, greater than they can have by any information of others. So the sight that they will have in heaven will exclude all doubting. The knowledge of God which the saints have in this world, has certainty in it, but yet the certainty is liable to be interrupted with temptations, and some degree of doubtings, but there is no such thing in heaven. The looking at the sun does not give a greater nor fuller certainty that it shines.

3d. It is called seeing because the apprehension of God's glory and love is as clear and lively as when anything is seen with bodily eyes. When we are actually beholding anything with our eyes in the meridian light of the sun, it does not give a more lively idea and apprehension of it than the saints in heaven have of the divine excellency and love of God. When we are looking upon things our idea is much more clear and perfect, and the impression stronger on the soul, than when we only think of a thing absent. But the intellectual views that the saints in heaven will have of God, will have far the advantage of bodily sight, it will be a much more perfect way of apprehending. The saints in heaven will see the glory of the body of Christ after the resurrection with bodily eyes, but they will have no more immediate and perfect way of seeing that visible glory than they will of beholding Christ's divine and spiritual glory. They will not want eyes to see that which is spiritual, as well as we can see anything that is corporeal. They will behold God in an ineffable, and to us now inconceivable, manner.

4th. The intellectual sight which the saints will have of God will make them as sensible of his presence, and give them as great advantages for conversing with him, as the sight of the bodily eyes doth an earthly friend. Yea, and more too. For when we see our earthly friends with bodily eyes,

we have not the most full and direct sight of their principal part, even their souls. We see the qualities, and dispositions, and acts of their minds, no otherwise than by outward signs of speech and behavior. Strictly speaking, we do not see the man, the soul, at all, but only its tabernacle or dwelling.

But their souls will have the most clear sight of the spiritual nature of God itself. They shall behold his attributes and disposition towards them more immediately, and therefore with greater certainty, than it is possible to see anything in the soul of an earthly friend by his speech and behavior. And therefore their spiritual sight will give them greater advantage for conversing with God, than the sight of earthly friends with bodily eyes, or hearing them with our ears, gives us for conversing with them.

2. I shall now give the reasons why the thus seeing God is that which will make the soul truly happy.

(1.) It yields a delight suitable to the nature of an intelligent creature. God hath made man, and man only, of all the creatures here below, an intelligent creature. And his reason and understanding are that by which he is distinguished from all inferior ranks of beings. Man's reason is, as it were, a heavenly ray, or, in the language of the wise man, it is "the candle of the Lord." It is that wherein mainly consists the natural image of God, it is the noblest faculty of man, it is that which ought to bear rule over the other powers. Being given for that end, that it might govern the soul.

Therefore those delights are most suitable to the nature of man, that are intellectual, which result from the exercises of this noblest, this distinguishing faculty. God, by giving man understanding, made him capable of such delights, and fitted him for them, and designed that such pleasures as those should be his happiness.

Intellectual pleasures consist in the beholding of spiritual excellencies and beauties, but the glorious excellency and beauty of God are far the greatest. God's excellence is the supreme excellence. When the understanding of the reasonable creature dwells here, it dwells at the fountain, and swims in a boundless, bottomless ocean. The love of God is also the most suitable entertainment of the soul of man, which naturally

desires the happiness of society, or of union with some other being. The love of so glorious a being is infinitely valuable, and the discoveries of it are capable of ravishing the soul above all other love. It is suitable to the nature of an intelligent being also, as it is that kind of delight that reason approves of. There are many other delights in which men indulge themselves, which, although they are pleasing to the senses and inferior powers, yet are contrary to reason. Reason opposes the enjoyment of them, so that unless reason be suppressed and stifled, they cannot be enjoyed without a war in the soul. Reason, the noblest faculty, resists the inferior rebellious powers. And the more reason is in exercise, the more will it resist, and the greater will be the inward war and opposition.

But this delight of seeing God the understanding approves of. It is a thing most agreeable to reason that the soul should delight itself in this, and the more reason is in exercise, the more it approves of it. So that when it is enjoyed, it is with inward peace, and a sweet tranquillity of soul. There is nothing in human nature that is opposite to it, but everything agrees and conforms to it.

(2.) The pleasure which the soul has in seeing God is not only its delight, but it is at the same time its highest perfection and excellency. Man's true happiness is his perfection and true excellency. When any reasonable creature finds that his excellency and his joy are the same thing, then he is come to right and real happiness, and not before. If a man enjoys any kind of pleasure and lives in it, how much soever he may be taken with what he enjoys, yet if he be not the more excellent for his pleasures, it is a certain sign that he is not a truly happy man. There are many pleasures that men are wont violently to pursue, which are no part of their dignity or perfection, but which, on the contrary, debase the man and make him vile. Instead of rendering the mind beautiful and lovely, they only serve to pollute it. Instead of exalting its nature, they make it more akin to that of beasts.

But it is quite the contrary with the pleasure that is to be enjoyed in seeing God. To see God is the highest honor and dignity to which the human nature can attain. That intellectual beholding of him is itself the highest excellency of the understanding. The great part of the excellency of man is his knowledge and understanding. But the knowledge of God is

the most excellent and noble kind of knowledge.

The delight and joy of the soul in that sight are the highest excellency of the other faculty, *viz.* the will. The heart of man cannot be brought to a higher excellency than to have delight in God, and complacency in the divine excellency and glory. The soul, while it remains under the power of corruption and depravity, cannot have any delight in God's glory. And when its moral relish is so far changed that it is disposed to delight in it, it is most excellently disposed. And when it actually exercises delight in God, it is the most noble and exalted exercise of which it is capable. So that the soul's seeing of God, and having pleasure and joy in the sight, is the greatest excellency of both the faculties.

(3.) The happiness of seeing God is a blessing without any mixture. That pleasure has the best claim to be called man's true happiness, which comes unmixed, and without alloy. But so doth the joy of seeing God. It neither brings any bitterness, nor will it suffer any.

1st. This pleasure brings no bitterness with it. That is not the case with other delights, in which natural men are wont to place their happiness. They are bitter sweets, yielding a kind of momentary pleasure in gratifying an appetite, but wormwood and gall are mingled in the cup. He who plucks these roses, finds that they grow on thorns. He who tastes of this honey is sure to find in it a sting. If men place their happiness in them, reason and conscience will certainly give them inward disturbance in their enjoyment. There will be the sting of continual disappointments, for carnal delights are of such a nature that they keep the soul, that places its happiness in them, always big with expectation and in eager pursuit, while they are evermore like shadows, and never yield what is hoped for. They who give themselves up to them, unavoidably bring upon themselves many heavy inconveniences. If they promote their pleasure in one way, they destroy their comforts in many other ways. And this sting ever accompanies them, that they are but short-lived, they will soon vanish, and be no more.

And as to the pleasure found in the enjoyment of earthly friends, there is a bitterness goes also with that. An intense love to any earthly object, though it may afford high enjoyment, yet greatly multiplies our cares and

anxieties through the defects and blemishes, the instability and changeableness, of the object, the calamities to which it is exposed, and the short duration of all such friendships, and of the pleasures thence arising.

Some men take a great deal of pleasure in study, in the increase of knowledge. But Solomon, who had great experience, long ago observed that this also is vanity, because he that increases knowledge increases sorrow. Ecc.. 1:17, 18, “And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.” But the delight which the sight of God affords to the soul, brings no bitterness with it, there is no disappointment accompanies it, it promises not more than it yields, but on the contrary the pleasure is greater than could be imagined before God was seen. It brings no sting of conscience along with it, it brings no vexing care nor anxiety, it leaves no loathing nor disrelish behind it.

There is nothing in God which gives uneasiness to him who beholds him. The view of one attribute adds to the joy that is raised by another. A sight of the holiness of God, gives unspeakable pleasure to the mind. The idea of it is a perception beyond measure the most delightful that can exist in a created mind. And then the beholding of God’s grace adds to this joy, for the soul then considers that the Being who is so amiable in himself, is so communicative, so disposed to love and benevolence. The view of the majesty of God greatly heightens this joy: to behold such grace and goodness, and such goodness and majesty, untied together. Especially will the sight of God’s love to himself, the person beholding, increase the pleasure, when he considers that so great and glorious a being loves him, and is his God and friend. Again, the beholding of God’s infinite power will still add to the pleasure, for he reflects that he, who is his friend, and loves him with so great a love, can do all things for him. So the beholding of his wisdom, because he thereby knows what is best for him, and knows how so to order things, as shall make him most blessed. So the consideration of his eternity and immutability, it will rejoice him to think that his friend and his portion is an eternal and unchangeable friend and portion. The beholding of God’s happiness will increase the joy, to

consider that he is so happy, who is so much the object of his love. That love of God, in those who shall see God, will cause them exceedingly to rejoice in the happiness of God. Even the sight of God's vindictive justice will add to their joy. This justice of God will appear glorious to them, and will make them prize his love.

2d. This joy is without mixture, not only as it brings not bitterness with it, but also as it will not suffer any. The sight of God excludes everything that is of a nature different from delight. This light is such, as wholly excludes darkness.

It is not in the power of any earthly enjoyment to drive and shut out all trouble from the heart. If a man has some things in which he takes comfort and pleasure, there are others that yield him uneasiness and sorrow; if he has some things in the world that are sweet, there are others that are bitter, against which it is not in the power of his pleasures to help him. We never can find anything here below that shall make us so happy, but that we shall have grief and pleasure mixed together. This world, let us make the best of it, will be spotted with black and white, varied with clouds and sunshine. And to them who yield their hearts to it, it will yield pain as well as pleasure. But this pleasure of seeing God can suffer no mixture. For this pleasure of seeing God is so great and strong that it takes the full possession of the heart. It fills it perfectly full, so that there shall be no room for any sorrow, no room in any corner for anything of an adverse nature from joy. There is no darkness that can bear such powerful light. It is impossible that they who see God face to face, who behold his glory and love so immediately as they do in heaven, should have any such thing as grief or pain in their hearts. When once the saints are come into God's presence, tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The pleasure will be so great, as fully and perfectly to employ every faculty; the sight of God's glory and love will be so wonderful, so engaging to the mind, and it shall keep all the powers of it in such strong attention, that the soul will be wholly possessed and taken up.

Again. There will be in what they shall see, a sufficient antidote against everything that would afford uneasiness, or that can have any tendency thereto. If there were sin in the heart before, that used by its exercise to

disturb its peace and quiet, and was a seed and spring of trouble, the immediate and full sight of God's glory will at once drive it all away. Sin cannot remain in the heart which thus beholds God, for sin is a principle of enmity against God. But there can no enmity remain in one, who after this manner sees God's glory. It must and will wholly drive away any such principle, and change it into love. The imperfect sight that the saints have of God's glory here, transforms them in part into the same image. But this perfect sight will transform them perfectly. If there be the hatred of enemies, the vision of the love and power of God will be a sufficient antidote against it, so that it can give no uneasiness. If the saint is removed by death from all his earthly friends, and earthly enjoyments, that will give no uneasiness to him, when he sees what a fullness there is in God. He will see that there is all in him, so that he possesses him can lose nothing. Whatever is taken from him he sustains no loss. And whatever else there may be, that would otherwise afford grief and uneasiness to the soul, it cannot affect him who is in the presence of God and sees his face.

(4.) This joy of seeing God is the true blessedness of man because the fountain that supplies it is equal to man's desire and capacity.

When God gave man his capacity of happiness, he doubtless made provision for the filling of it. There was some good which God had in his eye, when he made the vessel, and made it of such dimensions, which he knew to be sufficient to fill it. And doubtless that, whatever it be, is man's true blessedness, and that good which is found not to be commensurate to man's capacity and natural desires, and never can equal it, is certainly not that wherein man's happiness consists. Man's desires and capacities are commensurate one with another. When once the capacity is filled, the soul desires no more.

Now in order to judge how great man's capacity is, we must consider the capacity of his principal and leading faculty, *viz.* his understanding. So great as is the capacity of that faculty, so great is man's capacity of enjoyment, so great a good as the soul is capable of understanding, so great a good it is capable of enjoying. As great a good as the soul is capable of comprehending in its perception and idea, so great a good is it capable of receiving with the other faculty, the will, which keeps pace with

the understanding. And that good which the soul can receive with both faculties, of that is it capable of being made the possessor and enjoyer.

But it is easy to perceive that there is nothing here below that can give men such delight as shall be equal to this faculty. Let a man enjoy as great an affluence of earthly comforts as he will, still there is room. Man's nature is capable of a great deal more. There are certain things wanting to which the understanding can extend itself, which he could wish were added.

But the fountain that supplies that joy and delight, which the soul has in seeing God, is sufficient to fill the vessel. Because it is infinite. He that sees the glory of God, in his measure beholds that of which there is no end. The understanding may extend itself as far as it will. It doth but take its flight into an endless expanse and dive into a bottomless ocean. It may discover more and more of the beauty and loveliness of God, but it never will exhaust the fountain. The body of man may as well swallow up the ocean, or his soul embrace immensity, as he can extend his faculties to the utmost of God's excellency.

So in like manner it may be said of the love of God. We can never by soaring and ascending come to the height of it. We can never by descending come to the depth of it. Or by measuring, know the length and breadth of it. Eph. 3:18, 19, "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." So that let the thoughts and desires extend themselves as they will, here is space enough for them, in which they may expand forever. How blessed therefore are they that do see God, who are come to this exhaustless fountain! They have obtained that delight which gives full satisfaction. Having come to this pleasure, they neither do nor can desire any more. They can sit down fully contented, and take up with this enjoyment forever and ever, and desire no change. After they have had the pleasure of beholding the face of God millions of ages, it will not grow a dull story. The relish of this delight will be as exquisite as ever, there is enough still for the utmost employment of every faculty.

(5.) This delight in the vision of God hath an unfailing foundation. God

made man to endure forever, and therefore that which is man's true blessedness, we may conclude has a sure and lasting foundation. As to worldly enjoyments, their foundation is a sandy one, that is continually wearing away, and certainly will at last let the building fall. If we take pleasure in riches, riches in a little while will be gone. If we take pleasure in gratifying our senses, those objects whence we draw our gratifications will perish with the using, and our senses themselves also will be gone, the organs will be worn out, and our whole outward form will turn to dust. If we take pleasure in union with our earthly friends, that union must be broken. The bonds are not durable, but will soon wear asunder.

But he who has the immediate intellectual vision of God's glory and love, and rejoices in that, has his happiness built upon an everlasting rock. Isa. 26:4, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In the Hebrew it is, "in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of ages."

The glory of God is subject to no changes nor vicissitudes, it will never cease to shine forth. History gives us an account of the sun's light failing, and becoming more faint and dim for many months together. But the glory of God will never be subject to fade. Of the light of that Sun there never will be any eclipse or dimness, but it will shine eternally in its strength. Isa. 60:19, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." So the love of God, to those who see his face, will never fail, or be subject to any abatement. He loves his saints with an everlasting love. Jer. 31:3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Those streams of pleasure which are at God's right hand, are never dry, but ever flowing and ever full.

How much doth the sense of the sureness of this foundation confirm and heighten the joy! The soul enjoys its delight in a sense of this, free from all fears and jealousies, and with an unspeakable quietness and assurance. Isa. 32:17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

From this part of the subject we may derive several important and useful

reflections.

1st. Here we may see one instance wherein the revelation of Jesus Christ excels all human wisdom. It was a thing that had been beyond the wisdom of the world, to tell wherein man's true happiness consisted. There was a vast variety of opinions about it among the wise men and philosophers of the heathen. Indeed on no other subject was there so great difference among them. If I remember right, there were several hundred different opinions reckoned up respecting it, which shows that they were woefully in the dark. Though there were many very wise men among them, men famed through all succeeding ages for their knowledge and wisdom, yet their reason was not sufficient to find out man's true happiness.

We can give reasons for it now that it is revealed, and it seems so rational, that one would think the light of nature sufficient to discover it. But we having always lived in the enjoyment of gospel light, and being accustomed to it, are hardly sensible how dependent we are upon it, and how much we should be in the dark about things that now seem plain to us, if we never had had our reason assisted by revelation.

God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world by the gospel. 1 Cor. 1:20, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the dispute of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" *I.e.* he hath shown the foolishness of their wisdom by this brighter light of his revelation. For all that philosophy and human wisdom could do, it was the gospel that first taught the world wherein mankind's true blessedness consisted, and that taught them the way to attain to it.

2d. Hence we learn the great privilege we have, who possess such advantages to come to the blessedness of seeing God. We have the true God revealed to us in the Word of God, who is the Being in the sight of whom this happiness is to be enjoyed. We have the glorious attributes and perfections of God declared to us. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is discovered in the gospel which we enjoy, his beauties and glories are there as it were pointed forth by God's own hand to our view, so that we have those means which God hath provided for our obtaining those beginnings of this sight of him which the saints have in this world,

in that spiritual knowledge which they have of God, which is absolutely necessary in order to our having it perfectly in another world.

The knowledge which believers have of God and his glory, as appearing in the face of Christ, is the imperfect beginning of this heavenly sight, it is an earnest of it, it is the dawning of the heavenly light. And this beginning must evermore precede, or a perfect vision of God in heaven cannot be obtained. And all those that have this beginning, shall obtain that perfection also. Great therefore is our privilege, that we have the means of this spiritual knowledge. We may in this world see God as in a glass darkly, in order to our seeing him hereafter face to face. And surely our privilege is very great, that he has given us that glass from whence God's glory is reflected. We have not only the discoveries of God's glory in the doctrines of his word, but we have abundant directions how to act, so that we may obtain a perfect and beatific sight of God, one of which we have in our text, and of which I shall speak particularly hereafter.

3d. This doctrine may lead us to a sense of the blessedness of the heavenly state, and justly cause us to long after it. In heaven the saints do see God, they enjoy that vision of him of which we have been speaking in its perfection. All clouds and darkness are there removed, they there behold the glory and love of God more immediately, and with greater certainty, and a more strong and lively apprehension than a man beholds his friend when he is with him, and sees his face by the noon-day sun, and with far greater advantages for conversation and enjoyment.

Well may this make the heavenly state appear a blessed state to us, and make us to breathe after it. Well may the consideration of these things make the saints wait for and desire their happy change. Well may it make them long for the appearing of Christ. This they know, that when he shall appear, they shall "see him as he is." 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

This may well be comforting to the saints under the apprehensions of death, and it is a consideration sufficient to take away the sting of it, and uphold them while walking through the midst of that valley. This also

may well comfort and uphold them in all troubles and difficulties they meet with here, that after a little while they shall see God, which will immediately dry up all tears, and drive away all sorrow and sighing, and expel forever every darksome thought from the heart.

4th. Hence we learn that a life of holiness is the pleasantest life in this world, because in such a life we have the imperfect beginnings of a blessed and endless sight of God. And so they have somewhat of true happiness while here, they have the seeds of blessedness sown in their souls, and they begin to shoot forth.

As for all others, those who do not live a holy life, they have nothing at all of true happiness, because they have nothing of the knowledge of God.

Second, to be pure in heart, is the certain and only way to attain to this blessedness.

We have shown what this seeing of God is, and have represented in some measure how great is the blessedness of so seeing him. And if what we have heard is believed and cordially received by us, it will be sufficient to awaken our attention to any instructions from the Word of God that are to point out the way to us wherein we may attain to this blessedness.

If men should hear of some vast estate, or some rich hidden treasure, and at the same time should hear of some very feasible way in which they might make it all their own, how ready would they be to hear, with what eagerness would they listen to those who should bring such news and give them such directions, provided they had reason to believe that what was told them was true! We are here told of a much truer and greater blessedness than any treasure of silver, and gold, and pearls can yield. And we are also told of the way whereby we may assuredly become the possessors of it, by him who certainly knows. I shall show,

1. What it is to be pure in heart.

2. That to be pure in heart, is the sure way to gain this blessedness.

3. That it is the only way.

1. I shall inquire what it is to be pure in heart. Purity of heart is here to be understood in distinction from a mere external purity, or a purity of the outward actions and behavior in those things that appear to men in an external morality, and an outward attendance on ordinances, and a profession of the true religion and pure doctrines, and a making an outward show and appearance of godliness.

Christ had very probably in our text an eye to the formality and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and other great saints, as they accounted themselves, and were accounted among the Jews. These were exceedingly exact in their observance of the ordinances of the ceremonial law, they were careful not to deviate from it in the least punctilio. For instance, how exact were they in observing the law of tithes. They were careful to bring the tenth of the herbs in their gardens, as mint, anise, and cumin. They were very careful to keep themselves from all ceremonial uncleanness, and they even added to the law in this particular. They were for being stricter and purer than the law required, and therefore made conscience of washing their hands before every meal. They were very strict to avoid conversing with the Samaritans. They would not eat with them, nor have any dealings with them, lest they should be defiled. They used to say to other nations, “Stand by thyself, come not nigh, for I am holier than thou.” They looked upon themselves only as pure, because they were the children of Abraham, and because they were circumcised and attended the ceremonial law, because they made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, and because of the external purity, they looked upon themselves as the peculiar favorites of heaven, and expected to be admitted to see God, when all the uncircumcised, and those that were not the children of Abraham, should be excluded.

But Christ corrects this their mistake, and teaches that such an external purity will never give a man a title to this blessedness, for it is purity of heart that is requisite in order to attain to it. Mat. 5:20, “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of

heaven."

However exact any man may be in the external observance of moral, instituted duties, if he be careful to wrong no man, and can say, as the young Pharisee did, "All these have I kept from my youth," *i.e.* as to an external observance, if he be very strict in keeping the sabbath and in coming to the house of God, in attending family and secret prayer, yet if he has not holiness of heart, he is never [likely] to see God. It is no reformation of manners that is sufficient, but there must be a new heart, and a right spirit. It is the heart that God requires. Pro. 23:26, "My son, give me thine heart." It is the heart that God looks at. However fair and pure an outside there may be, that may be very pleasing to men, yet if there be not purity of heart, the man is not at all the more acceptable to God. 1 Sam. 16:7, "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." If men outwardly behave well and speak well, yet it is not accepted without trying and weighing the heart. Pro. 16:2, "All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits." It is the spirit which is the subject of this blessedness of seeing God, and therefore the qualities of the spirit, and not so much those of the outward man, are regarded.

Now the heart is said to be pure in the sense of the text,

(1.) With respect to the spiritual defilement from which it is pure;

(2.) With respect to certain positive qualities that it is endowed with.

The word *pure*, in its common acceptation, merely signifies something negative, *viz.* the absence of all mixture or defilement. But in pureness of heart, as it is used in Scripture, seems to be implied both something negative and positive, not only the absence or removal of defilement, but also positive qualities, that are called pure.

(1.) The heart is said to be pure with respect to the filthiness from which it is pure. Sin is the greatest filthiness. There is nothing that can so defile and render so abominable. It is that which has an infinite

abominableness in it. And indeed it is the only spiritual defilement. There is nothing else that can defile the soul. Now there are none in this life who are pure from sin in such a sense that there is no remainder, no mixture of sin. Pro. 20:9, “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” So that if this were the requisite qualification, none of the children of men would ever come to see God.

But the purity of heart with respect to sin, that may be obtained in this life, consists in the following things:

1st. It implies that the soul sees the filthiness that there is in sin, and accordingly abhors it. Sin, that is so filthy in itself, is become so sensibly to the man whose heart is pure. He sees its odiousness and deformity, and it is become nauseous to him.

To those animals which are of a filthy and impure nature, as swine and dogs, ravens and vermin, those things that are filthy and nauseous to mankind, do not seem at all disgusting. But on the contrary they love them, it is food that suits their appetites. It is because they are of an impure and filthy nature. The nature of the animal is agreeable to such things. So it is with men of impure hearts. They see no filthiness in sin, they do not nauseate it, it is in no way uncomfortable to them to have it hanging about them, they can wallow in it without any reluctance. Yea, they take pleasure in it, it is their meat and their drink, because they are of an impure nature. But he who has become pure in heart hates sin. He has antipathy to it. He does not love to be near it. If he sees any of it hanging about him, he abhors himself for it. He seems filthy to himself. He is a burden to himself. He abhors the very sight of it, and shuns the appearance of it. If he sees sin in others, it is a very unpleasant sight to him. As sin, and as committed against God, it is grievous and uncomfortable to him wherever he discovers it. It is because his heart is changed, and God has given him a pure nature.

2d. It implies godly sorrow for sin. The pure heart has not only respect to that spiritual filthiness that is present to abhor it and shun it, but it has also respect to past sin. The consideration of that grieves it; it causes shame and sorrow to think that it ever rejoiced in such defilement, that it ever was so abominable as to love it and feed upon it. Every transgression

leaves a filth behind it upon the soul, and this remaining filth occasions pain to the renewed and purified heart. By godly sorrow the heart exerts itself against the filthiness of past sins, and does, as it were, endeavor to cast it off, and purge itself from it.

3d. It implies that sin is mortified in the heart, so that it is free from the reigning power and dominion of it. Though the heart is not perfectly free from all sin, yet a freedom is begun. Before, spiritual filth had the possession of the heart, corruption had the entire government of the soul, every faculty was so wholly defiled by it, that all its acts were filthy, and only filthy, the heart was entirely enslaved to sin.

But now the power of sin is broken, the strong bands by which it was tied and fastened to the heart are in a great measure loosed, so that corruption has no longer the possession and government of the heart as before. The principal seal, the throne of the heart, that was formerly possessed by corruption, is now purged, and filthiness does now as it were only possess the inferior and exterior parts of the soul. John 13:10, “He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet.”

4th. The heart that is pure will be continually endeavoring to cleanse itself from all remaining filthiness. Though there be remains of impurity, yet the new nature is so contrary to it that it will never rest or be quiet, but will always be cleansing itself; like a vessel of fermenting liquor, it will continue working, till it has worked itself clear, and cast off all the filth and sediment. Or like a stream of good water, if the water be in itself sweet and good, however it may be defiled from the muddy banks, it will refine as it runs, and will run itself clear again, but the fountain that yields impure water will never cleanse itself. So he who is pure in heart will never suffer himself to live in any sin. If he be overtaken in a fault he will return and cleanse himself again by repentance, and reformation, and a more earnest care that he may avoid that sin for the future.

The remaining corruption that is in his heart will be his great and continual burden, and he will be endeavoring to cleanse himself more and more. He will not rest in any supposed degree of purity, so long as he sees any degree of impurity remaining, but he will be striving after progress in the mortification of sin and in the increase of holiness.

5th. The heart is said to be pure, especially with respect to its cleanness from, and opposition to, the lust of uncleanness. This kind of wickedness we find to be more especially called uncleanness and filthiness in Scripture. It brings a peculiar turpitude upon the soul, and defiles the temple of God. 1 Cor. 3:17, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Pureness in Scripture is sometimes used only in this restrained sense, with respect to freedom from fleshly impurities. So it seems to be, Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Now this sort of purity of heart is absolutely necessary in order to our coming to see God. There must be a renunciation of all impure and lascivious practices and conversation. They who live in the indulgence of such a lust in one kind of practice or another, or though it be only with their eyes or in their thoughts, are of impure hearts, and shall never come to see God unless they have new hearts given them.

They that have pure hearts, abhor and are afraid of such things. Jude 23. They take heed that they do not prostitute their souls to so much as mental and imaginary, much less to practical, impurities, and works of darkness.

(2.) The heart is said to be pure, in respect to its being endowed with positive qualities, that are of a contrary nature to spiritual filthiness.

Though purity in strictness be only a freedom from filth, yet there are positive qualities of mind that seem to be implied in purity of heart, which may be reckoned a part of it, because of their contrariety to filthiness. The heart by reason of them is still more remote from defilement, as a greater light may be said to be purer than a lesser. For although the lesser light has no mixture of darkness, yet the greater light is still more remote from darkness.

1st. He is pure in heart, who delights in holy exercises. Those exercises that are holy are natural and pleasant to him, he sees the beauty there is

in holiness, and that beauty has such strong influence upon his heart that he is captivated thereby. He delights in the pure and holy exercise of love to God, in the fear of God, in praising and glorifying God, and in pure and holy love to men. He delights in holy thoughts and meditations. Those exercises of the understanding that are holy, are most agreeable to him, and those exercises of the will. Such inclinations, desires, and affections, are most delightful, which are spiritual and holy.

2d. He is pure in heart, who chooses and takes the greatest delight in spiritual enjoyment. A spiritual appetite is that which governs in his soul, and carries him above the mean lust and defiled enjoyments of this world, towards spiritual and heavenly objects. The enjoyments which he chooses and chiefly desires, such as seeing God and enjoying communion with him, are enjoyments of the most refined and pure nature. He hungers and thirsts after the pure light of the new Jerusalem.

2. To be pure in heart is the sure way to obtain the blessedness of seeing God. This is the divine road to the blissful and glorious presence of God, which, if we take it, will infallibly lead us thither.

God is the giver of the pure heart, and he gives it for this very end, that it may be prepared for the blessedness of seeing him. Thus we are taught in the Scriptures. The people of God are sanctified, and their hearts are made pure, that they may be prepared for glory, as vessels are prepared by the potter for the use he designs. They are elected from all eternity to eternal life, and have purity of heart given them, on purpose to fit them for that to which they are chose. Rom 9:23, “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory.”

We read of the church being arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, by which is signified the church’s purity. And it was to fit it for the enjoyment of Christ. Rev. 19:7, 8, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready; and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” And in the 21st. chap. 2d verse, the church thus purified is said to be as a bride adorned for her husband. “And I, John, saw the holy city,

new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Therefore if God gives the pure heart to fit and prepare us for the vision of himself, he will obtain his own end. For who can prevent him from doing what he purposes?

God also hath promised it. He hath given his faithful word for it in our text; and to the same purpose is Psa. 24:3, 4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." And again, Isa. 33:15, 16, 17, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly: he that despiseth the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off."

3. This is the only way to come to this blessedness.

(1.) It is no way fit or suitable that those who have not pure hearts should be admitted to this privilege. It would be most unsuitable for those who are all over defiled with the most loathsome filth, to be admitted into the glorious presence of the King of heaven and earth. It would not become the majesty of God to allow those who are so abominable to come into his blessed presence. Nor is it at all becoming his holiness, whereby he is of purer eyes than to behold such pollution.

It becomes persons when they come into the presence of a king, so to attire themselves, that they may not appear in a sordid habit, and it would be much more unsuitable still, for any to come all defiled with filth. But sin is that which renders the soul much more loathsome in the sight of God. This spiritual filth is of a nature most disagreeable to that pure, heavenly light; it would be most unsuitable to have the pollution of sin and wickedness, and the light of glory, mixed together; and it is what God never will suffer. It would be a most unbecoming thing for such to be the objects of God's favor, and to see the love of God, and to receive the testimonies of that love. It would be most unsuitable for the glorious and most blessed God to embrace in the arms of his love, that that is infinitely

more filthy than a reptile.

(2.) It is naturally impossible that the soul which is impure should see God. The sight of God's glory, and impurity of heart, are not compatible in the same subject. Where spiritual defilement holds possession of the heart, it is impossible that the divine light which discovers God's glory should enter. How can he, who is under the power of enmity against God, and who only hates God, see his beauty and loveliness at the same time? Sin, so long as it has the government and possession of the soul, will blind the mind and maintain darkness. As long as sin keeps possession, the heart will be blinded through its deceitfulness.

(3.) If it were possible for them to see God, they could not find any blessedness in it. What pleasure would it give to the soul that hates holiness, to see the holiness of God. What pleasure to them who are God's enemies, to see his greatness and glory? Wicked men have no relish for such intellectual, pure, and holy delights and enjoyments. As we have observed already, to have a relish for spiritual enjoyments is one part of the purity of heart spoken of in the text.

(4.) It is impossible that such should be the objects of God's favor and complacence, and therefore they cannot have this part of the blessed-making vision of God, *viz.* the seeing of his love. It is impossible that God should take pleasure in wickedness, or should have complacence in the wicked, and therefore they cannot have the blessed-making vision of God, for seeing the love of God is an essential part of it. If a man sees how glorious God is, and has not this consideration with it, that he has a property in this glory of God, if he cannot consider this glorious being as his friend, if he takes no pleasure in him, but, on the contrary, loathes and abhors him, the sight of God will be to him no blessedness.

APPLICATION

I. Hence we learn how great a thing it is to be an upright and sincere Christian. For all such are pure in heart, and stand entitled to the blessedness of seeing the most high God. The time is coming when they shall assuredly see him. They shall see him who is infinitely greater than all the kings of the earth. They shall see him face to face, shall see as

much of his glory and beauty as the eyes of their souls are capable of beholding. They shall not only see him for a few moments, or an hour, but they shall dwell in his presence, and shall sit down forever to drink in the rays of his glory. They shall see him invested in all this majesty, with smiles and love in his countenance. They shall see him, and converse with him, as their nearest and best friend.

Thus shall they see him soon. The intervening moments fly swiftly, the time is even at the door, when they shall be admitted to this blessedness.

II. Let the consideration of this subject put us all upon inquiring, whether we ourselves are pure in heart. Is our religion of that kind which has its seat chiefly in the heart, or doth it chiefly consist in what is outward in morality and formality? Have we ever experienced a change of heart? Have we a right spirit renewed within us? Have we ever seen the odiousness and filthiness that there is in sin? Is it what we hate, wherever we see it? And do we especially hate it in ourselves, and loathe ourselves for it? Is it the object of our hatred as sin, and as it is against God?

And are there any that now hear me, who think themselves to be Christians, who do yet, either in their imaginations and thoughts, or in any secret practice, allow and indulge the lust of uncleanness, and live in such a way? If it be so, they had great need to bethink themselves whether or no they are not of that generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not cleansed from their filthiness. If they imagine that they are pure in heart, and live in such wickedness, their confidence is vain presumption. Inquire whether holy exercises and holy employments are the delight of your soul, and what you take pleasure in above all other things in which you can be engaged. Are the enjoyments that you choose, and take the greatest delight in, spiritual and heavenly enjoyments? Is the seeing of God, and conversing with him, and dwelling in his presence forever, what you should of your own accord choose above all other things?

III. I would earnestly exhort those who hear me, to make to themselves a pure heart. Though it be God's work to give it, yet it is as truly your work to obtain it. Though it be God's work to purify the heart, yet the actual, or rather the active, procuring of it is your act. All pure and holy exercises

are man's acts, and they are his duty. Therefore we are commanded to make us a new heart, and a right spirit. Eze. 18:31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?"

We must not think to excuse ourselves by saying that it is God's work, that we cannot purify our own hearts. For though it be God's work in one sense, yet it is equally our work in another. Jam. 4:8, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." If you do not engage in this work yourselves, and purify your own hearts, they never will be pure. If you do not get a pure heart, the blame of it will be laid to your own backwardness. The unclean soul hates to be purified. It is opposite to its nature. There is a great deal of self-denial in it. But be content to contradict the nature and bent of your own heart, that it may be purified. However grating it may be to you at first, yet consider how blessed the issue will be. Though the road be a little rough in the beginning, yet it will grow pleasanter and pleasanter, till at last it will infallibly lead to that lightsome and glorious country, the inhabitants of which do see and converse with God. Pro. 4:18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If you would be in the way to have a pure heart,

First, purify your hands. Cleanse yourself from every external impurity of speech and behavior. Take heed that you never defile your hands in known wickedness. Break off all your sins by righteousness. And take heed that you do not give way to impure lusts that would entice to sinful actions. If you set about the work of cleansing yourself, but when a temptation comes then plunge yourself into the mire again, you never will be likely to become pure. But you must be steady in your reformation and the amendment of your ways and doings.

Second, take heed you do not rest in external purity, but seek purity of heart in the ways of God's appointment. Seek it in a constant and diligent attendance on all God's ordinances.

Third, be often searching your own heart, and seek and pray that you may see the filthiness of it. If ever you are made pure you must be brought to

see that you are filthy. You must see the plague and pollution of your own heart.

Fourth, beg of God that he would give you his Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God that purifies the soul. Therefore the Spirit of God is often compared to fire, and is said to baptize with fire. He cleanses the heart, as fire cleanses the metals; and burns up the filth and pollution of the mind, and is therefore called the Spirit of burning. Isa. 4:4, "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning."

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True Saints, when Absent from the Body, Are Present with the Lord

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." [2 Corinthians 5:8]

The apostle in this place is giving a reason why he went on with so much boldness and immovable steadfastness, through such labors, sufferings, and dangers of his life, in the service of his Lord; for which his enemies, the false teachers among the Corinthians, sometimes reproached him as being beside himself, and driven on by a kind of madness. In the latter part of the preceding chapter, the apostle informs the Christian Corinthians, that the reason why he did thus, was, that he firmly believed the promises that Christ had made to his faithful servants of a glorious future eternal reward, and knew that these present afflictions were light, and but for a moment, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The same discourse is continued in this chapter; wherein the apostle further insists on the reason he had given of his constancy in suffering, and exposing himself to death in the work of the ministry, even the more happy state he expected after death. And this is the subject of the text; wherein may be observed,

1. The great future privilege, which the apostle hoped for; that of being present with Christ. The words, in the original, properly signify dwelling with Christ, as in the same country or city, or making a home with Christ.

2. When the apostle looked for this privilege, viz., when he should be absent from the body. Not to wait for it till the resurrection, when soul and body should be united again. He signifies the same thing in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. i. 22, 23: "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a

strait between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ."

3. The value the apostle set on this privilege. It was such, that for the sake of it, he chose to be absent from the body. He was willing rather, or (as the word properly signifies) it were more pleasing to him, to part with the present life, and all its enjoyments, and be possessed of this great benefit, than to continue here.

4. The present benefit, which the apostle had by his faith and hope of this future privilege, and of his great value for it, viz., that hence he received courage, assurance, and constancy of mind, agreeable to the proper import of the word that is rendered, we are confident. The apostle is now giving a reason of that fortitude and immovable stability of mind, with which he went through those extreme labors, hardships and dangers, which he mentions in this discourse; so that, in the midst of all, he did not faint, was not discouraged, but had constant light, and inward support, strength, and comfort in the midst of all: agreeable to the 10th verse of the foregoing chapter, "For which cause, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." And the same is expressed more particularly in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, of that chapter: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And in the next chapter, verses 4-10: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Among the many useful observations there might be raised from the text, I shall at this time only insist on that which lies most plainly before us in

the words, viz., this:

The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ.

Departed souls of saints go to be with Christ, in the following respects:

I. They go to dwell in the same blessed abode with the glorified human nature of Christ.

The human nature of Christ is yet in being. He still continues, and will continue to all eternity, to be both God and man. His whole human nature remains: not only his human soul, but also his human body. His dead body rose from the dead; and the same that was raised from the dead, is exalted and glorified at God's right hand; that which was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore.

And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where he remains. And this place is that which we call the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens; a place beyond all the visible heavens. Eph. iv. 9, 10, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." This is the same which the apostle calls the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, reckoning the aerial heaven as the first, the starry heaven as the second, and the highest heaven as the third. This is the abode of the holy angels; they are called "the angels of heaven," Matt. xxiv. 36; "The angels which are in heaven," Mark xiii. 32; "The angels of God in heaven," Matt. xxii. 30, and Mark xii. 25. They are said "always to behold the face of the Father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii, 10. And they are elsewhere often represented as before the throne of God, or surrounding his throne in heaven, and sent from thence, and descending from thence on messages to this world. And thither it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted, when they die. They are not reserved in some abode distinct from the highest heaven; a place of rest, which they are kept in, till the day of judgment; such as some imagine, which they call the hades of the happy: but they go directly to heaven itself. This is the saints' home, being their Father's house: they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and

this is the other and better country that they are travelling to, Heb. xi. 13-26. This is the city they belong to: Philip. iii. 20, "Our conversation or (as the word properly signifies) citizenship, is in heaven." Therefore this undoubtedly is the place the apostle has respect to in my text, when he says,"We are willing to forsake our former house, the body, and to dwell in the same house, city or country, wherein Christ dwells;" which is the proper import of the words of the original. What can this house, or city, or country be, but that house, which is elsewhere spoken of, as their proper home, and their Father's house, and the city and country to which they properly belong, and whither they are travelling all the while they continue in this world, and the house, city, and country where we know the human nature of Christ is?

This is the saints' rest; here their hearts are while they live; and here their treasure is. "The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is designed for them, is reserved in heaven," 1 Pet. i. 4; and therefore they never can have their proper and full rest till they come here. So that undoubtedly their souls, when absent from their bodies (when the Scriptures represent them as in a state of perfect rest), arrive hither. Those two saints, that left this world, to go to their rest in another world, without dying, viz., Enoch and Elijah, went to heaven. Elijah was seen ascending up to heaven, as Christ was. And to the same resting place, is there all reason to think, that those saints go, that leave the world, to go to their rest, by death. Moses, when he died in the top of the mount, ascended to the same glorious abode with Elias, who ascended without dying. They are companions in another world; as they appeared together at Christ's transfiguration. They were together at that time with Christ in the mount, when there was a specimen or sample of his glorification in heaven. And doubtless they were also together afterwards, with him, when he was, actually, fully glorified in heaven. And thither undoubtedly it was, that the soul of Stephen ascended, when he expired. The circumstances of his death demonstrate it, as we have an account of it, Acts vii. 55, &c.: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man (i.e. Jesus, in his human nature) standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their

ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive
my spirit." Before his death he had an extraordinary view of the glory that his Saviour had received in heaven, not only for himself, but for him, and all his faithful followers; that he might be encouraged, by the hopes of this glory, cheerfully to lay down his life for his sake. Accordingly he dies in the hope of this, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." By which doubtless he meant, "receive my spirit to be with thee, in that glory, wherein I have now seen thee, in heaven, at the right hand of God." And thither it was that the soul of the penitent thief on the cross ascended. Christ said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is the same with the third heaven; as appears by 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. There that which is called the third heaven in the 2d verse, in the 4th verse is called paradise. The departed souls of the apostles and prophets are in heaven; as is manifest from Rev. xviii. 20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets."

The church of God is distinguished in Scripture, from time to time, into these two parts; that part of it that is in heaven, and that which is in earth; Eph. iii. 14, 15, "Jesus Christ, of whom
the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Col. i. 20, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now what things in heaven are they for whom peace has been made by the blood of Christ's cross, and who have by him been reconciled to God, but the saints in heaven? In like manner we read, Eph. i. 10, of God's gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The spirits of just men made perfect are in the same city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem, with the innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; as is manifest by Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. The church of God is often in Scripture called by the name Jerusalem; and the apostle speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, or which is in heaven, as the mother of us all; but if no part of the church be in heaven, or none but Enoch and Elias, it is not likely that the church would be called the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

II. The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they go to dwell in the immediate, full and constant sight or view of him.

When we are absent from our dear friends, they are out of sight; but when we are with them, we have the opportunity and satisfaction of seeing them. So while the saints are in the body, and are absent from the Lord, HE is in several respects out of sight: 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing," &c. They have indeed, in this world, a spiritual sight of Christ; but they see through a glass darkly, and with great interruption; but in heaven they see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; "The pure in heart are blessed; for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. Their beatifical vision of God is in Christ, who is that brightness or effulgence of God's glory, by which his glory shines forth in heaven, to the view of saints and angels there, as well as here on earth. This is the Sun of righteousness, that is not only the light of this world, but is also the sun that enlightens the heavenly Jerusalem; by whose bright beams it is that the glory of God shines forth there, to the enlightening and making happy all the glorious inhabitants. "The Lamb is the light thereof; and so the glory of God doth lighten it," Rev. xxi. 23. None sees God the Father immediately, who is the King eternal, immortal, invisible; Christ is the image of that invisible God, by which he is seen by all elect creatures. The only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, and manifested him. None has ever immediately seen the Father, but the Son; and none else sees the Father any other way, than by the Son's revealing him. And in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect do see him as he is. They behold his glory. They see the glory of his divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the Godhead, the beauty of all his perfections; his great majesty, almighty power, his infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace, and they see the beauty of his glorified human nature, and the glory which the Father hath given him, as God-man and Mediator. For this end, Christ desired that his saints might "be with him, that they might behold his glory," John xvii. 24. And when the souls of the saints leave their bodies, to go to be with Christ, they behold the marvellous glory of that great work of his, the work of redemption, and of the glorious way of salvation by him; desire to look into. They have a most clear view of the unfathomable depths of the manifold wisdom and knowledge of God; and the most bright displays of

the infinite purity and holiness of God, that do appear in that way and work; and see in a much clearer manner than the saints do here, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height of the grace and love of Christ, appearing in his redemption. And as they see the unspeakable riches and glory of the attribute of God's grace, so they most clearly behold and understand Christ's eternal and unmeasurable dying love to them in particular. And in short, they see every thing in Christ that tends to kindle and inflame love, and every thing that tends to gratify love, and every thing that tends to satisfy them: and that in the most clear and glorious manner, without any darkness or delusion, without any impediment or interruption. Now the saints, while in the body, see something of Christ's glory and love; as we, in the dawning of the morning, see something of the reflected light of the sun mingled with darkness; but when separated from the body, they see their glorious and loving Redeemer, as we see the sun when risen, and showing his whole disk above the horizon, by his direct beams, in a clear hemisphere, and with perfect day.

III. The souls of true saints, when absent from the body go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most perfect conformity to and union with him.

Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the hotly; here beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image; but when they come to see him as he is, in heaven, then they become like him in another manner. That perfect sight will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement, and sinful unlikeness; as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light: it is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light; so it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain, in such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven; when they see that Sun of righteousness without a cloud, they themselves shine forth as the sun, and shall be as little suns, without a spot. For then is come the time when Christ presents his saints to himself, in glorious beauty; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and having holiness without a blemish. And then the saints' union with Christ is perfected. This also is begun in this world. The relative union is both begun and perfected at once, when the soul first

closes with Christ by faith: the real union, consisting in the union of hearts and affections, and in the vital union, is begun in this world and perfected in the next. The union of the heart of a believer to Christ, is begun when his heart is drawn to Christ, by the first discovery of divine excellency, at conversion; and consequent on this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ, is established a vital union with Christ; whereby the believer becomes a living branch of the true vine, living by a communication of the sap and vital juice of the stock and root; and a member of Christ's mystical body, living by a communication of spiritual and vital influences from the head, and by a kind of participation of Christ's own life. But while the saints are in the body, there is much remaining distance between Christ and them: there are remainders of alienation, and the vital union is very imperfect; and so consequently is the communication of spiritual life and
vital influences: there is much between Christ and believers to keep them asunder, much indwelling sin, much temptation, a world of carnal objects, to keep off the soul from Christ, and hinder a perfect coalescence.

But when the soul leaves the body, all these clogs and hinderances shall be removed, every separating wall shall be broken down, and every impediment taken out of the way, and all distance shall cease; the heart shall be wholly and forever attached and bound to him, by a perfect view of his glory. And the vital union shall then be brought to perfection; the soul shall live perfectly in and upon Christ, being perfectly filled with his spirit, and animated by his vital influences; living, as it were, only by Christ's life, without any remainder of spiritual death, or carnal life.

IV. Departed souls of saints are with Christ, as they enjoy a glorious and immediate intercourse and converse with him.
While we are present with our friends, we have opportunity for that free and immediate conversation with them, which we cannot have in absence from them. And therefore, by reason of the vastly more free, perfect, and immediate intercourse with Christ, which the saints enjoy when absent from the body, they are fitly represented as present with him.The most intimate intercourse becomes that relation that the saints stand in to Jesus Christ; and especially becomes that most perfect and glorious union they shall be brought into with him in heaven. They are not merely

Christ's servants, but his friends, John xv. 15. His brethren and companions, Psalm cxxii. 8; "yea, they are the spouse of Christ." They are espoused or betrothed to Christ while in the body; but when they go to heaven, they enter into the king's palace, their marriage with him is come, and the king brings them into his chambers indeed. They then go to dwell with Christ constantly, to enjoy the most perfect converse with him. Christ conversed in the most friendly manner with his disciples on earth; he admitted one of them to lean on his bosom: but they are admitted much more fully and freely to converse with him in heaven. Though Christ be there in a state of glorious exaltation, reigning in the majesty and glory of the sovereign Lord and God of heaven and earth, angels and men; yet this will not hinder intimacy and freedom of intercourse, but rather promote it. For he is thus exalted, not only for himself, but for them; he is instated in this glory of head over all things for their sakes, that they might be exalted and glorified; and when they go to heaven where he is, they are exalted and glorified with him; and shall not be kept at a more awful distance from Christ, but shall be admitted nearer, and to a greater intimacy. For they shall be unspeakably more fit for it, and Christ in more fit circumstances to bestow on them this blessedness. Their seeing the great glory of their friend and Redeemer, will not awe them to a distance, and make them afraid of a near approach; but on the contrary, will most powerfully draw them near, and encourage and engage them to holy freedom. For they will know that it is he that is their own Redeemer, and beloved friend and bridegroom; the very same that loved them with a dying love, and redeemed them to God by his blood; Matt. xiv. 27, "It is I; be not afraid." Rev. i. 17, 18," Fear not:--I am he that liveth, and was dead." And the nature of this glory of Christ that they shall see, will be such as will draw and encourage them; for they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness, but infinite grace, condescension, and mildness, and gentleness and sweetness, equal to his majesty. For he appears in heaven, not only as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as the Lamb, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne, "Rev. v. 5, 6; and this Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, to" feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water," Rev. vii. 17; so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them; but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise. When Mary was about to embrace Christ, being full of joy at the sight of him again alive

after his crucifixion, Christ forbids her to do it for the ended: John xx. 16, 17, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." As if he had said, "This is not the time and place for that freedom your love to me desires: this is appointed in heaven after myascension. I am going thither; and you that are my true disciples, shall, as my brethren and companions, soon be there with me in my glory. And then there shall be no restraint. That is the place appointed for the most perfect expressions of complacence and endearment, and full enjoyment of mutual love." And accordingly the souls of departed saints with Christ in heaven, shall have Christ as it were unbosomed unto them, manifesting those infinite riches of love towards them, that have been there from eternity; and they shall be enabled to express their love to him, in an infinitely better manner than ever they could while in the body. Thus they shall eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love; eternally receiving that light, eternally full of it, and eternally compassed round with it, and everlastingly reflecting it back again to the fountain of it.

V. The souls of the saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they are received to a glorious fellowship with Christ in his blessedness.

As the wife is received to a joint possession of her husband's estate, and as the wife of a prince partakes with him in his princely possessions and honors; so the church, the spouse of Christ, when the marriage comes, and she is received to dwell with him in heaven, shall partake with him in his glory. When Christ rose from the dead, and took possession of eternal life; this was not as a private person, but as the public head of all his redeemed people. He took possession of it for them, as well as for himself; and "they are quickened together with him, and raised up together." And so when he ascended into heaven, and was exalted to great glory there, this also was as a public person. He took possession of heaven, not only for himself, but his people, as their forerunner and head,

that they might ascend also, "and sit together in heavenly places with him," Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Christ writes upon them his new name," Rev. iii. 12; i.e., he makes them partakers of his own glory and exaltation in heaven. His new name is that new honor and glory that the Father invested him with, when he set him on his own right hand. As a prince, when he advances any one to new dignity in his kingdom, gives him a new title. Christ and his saints shall be glorified together, Rom. viii. 17.

The saints in heaven have communion, or a joint participation with Christ in his glory and blessedness in heaven, in the following respects more especially.

1. They partake with him in the ineffable delights he has in heaven, in the enjoyment of his Father.When Christ ascended into heaven, he was received to a glorious and peculiar joy and blessedness in the enjoyment of his Father, who, in his passion, hid his face from him; such an enjoyment as became the relation he stood in to the Father, and such as was a meet reward for the great and hard service he had performed on earth. Then "God showed him the path of life, and brought him into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and to sit on his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," as is said of Christ, Psalm xvi. 11. Then the Father "made him most blessed forever. He made him exceeding glad with his countenance;" as in Psalm xxi. 6. The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being his members, do, in some sort partake of his childlike relation to the Father; and so are heirs with him of his happiness in the enjoyment of his Father; as seems to be intimated by the apostle, in Gal. iv. 4--7. The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of his filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter, Psalm xiv. 13, and so partakes with her divine husband in his enjoyment of his Father and her Father, his God and her God." A promise of this seems to be implied in those words of Christ to Mary, John xx. 17. Thus Christ's faithful servants
"enter into the joy of their Lord," Matt. xxv. 21, 23, and "Christ's joy remains in them;" agreeably to those words of Christ, John xv. 11. Christ from eternity is, as it were, in the bosom of the Father, as the object of his infinite complacence. In him is the Father's eternal happiness. Before the world was, he was with the Father, in the enjoyment of his infinite love;

and had infinite delight and blessedness in that enjoyment; as he declares of himself in Prov. viii. 30: "Then I was by him as one brought up with him. And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And when Christ ascended to the Father after his passion, he went to him, to the enjoyment of the same glory and blessedness in the enjoyment of his love; agreeably to his prayer the evening before his crucifixion, John xvii. 5: "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." And in the same prayer, he manifests it to be his will, that his true disciples should be with him in the enjoyment of that joy and glory, which he then asked for himself, verse 13: "That my joy might be fulfilled in themselves:" verse 22, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." This glory of Christ, which the saints are to enjoy with him, is that which he has in the enjoyment of the Father's infinite love to him; as appears by the last words of that prayer of our Lord, verse 26: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." The love which the Father has to his Son is great indeed: the Deity does, as it were, wholly and entirely flow out in a stream of love to Christ; and the joy and pleasure of Christ is proportionably great. This is the stream of Christ's delights, the river of his infinite pleasure; which he will make his saints to drink of with him, agreeably to Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house. Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light." The saints shall have pleasure in partaking with Christ in his pleasure, and shall see light in his light. They shall partake with Christ of the same river of pleasure, shall drink of the same water of life, and of the same new wine in Christ's Father's kingdom, Matt. xxvi. 29. That new wine is especially that joy and happiness that Christ and his true disciples shall partake of together in glory, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, or the reward of his obedience unto death. Christ, at his ascension into heaven, received everlasting pleasures at his Father's right hand, and in the enjoyment of his Father's love, as the reward of his own death, or obedience unto death. But the same righteousness is reckoned to both head and members; and both shall have fellowship in the same reward, each according to their distinct capacity.That the saints in heaven have such a communion with Christ in his joy, and do so partake with him in his own enjoyment of the Father, does greatly manifest the

transcendent excellency of their happiness, and their being admitted to a vastly higher privilege
in glory than the angels.

2. The saints in heaven are received to a fellowship or participation with Christ in the glory of that dominion to which the Father hath exalted him. The saints, when they ascend to heaven as Christ ascended, and are made to sit together with him in heavenly places, and are partakers of the glory of his exaltation, are exalted to reign with him. They are through him made kings and priests, and reign with him, and in him, over the same kingdom. As the Father hath appointed unto him a kingdom, so he has appointed to them. The Father has appointed the Son to reign over his own kingdom, and the Son appoints his saints to reign in his. The Father has given to Christ to sit with him on his throne, and Christ gives to the saints to sit with him on his throne, agreeably to Christ's promise, Rev. iii. 21. Christ, as God's Son, is the heir of his kingdom, and the saints are joint heirs with Christ: which implies, that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with him, according to their capacity. Christ, in his kingdom, reigns over heaven and earth; he is appointed the heir of all things; and so all things are the saints'; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are theirs; because they are Christ's, and united to him, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. The angels are given to Christ as a part of his dominion: they are all given to wait upon him as ministering spirits to him. So also they are all, even the highest and most dignified of them, ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. They are Christ's angels, and they are also their angels. Such is the saints' union with Christ, and their interest in him, that what he possesses, they possess, in a much more perfect and blessed manner than if all things were given to them separately, and by themselves, to be disposed of according to their discretion. They are now disposed of so as, in every respect, to be most for their blessedness, by an infinitely better discretion than their own; and in being disposed of by their head and husband, between whom and them there is the most perfect union of hearts, and so the most perfect union of wills, and who are most perfectly each other's.

As the glorified spouse of this great King reigns with and in him, in his dominion over the universe, so more especially does she partake with him

in the joy and glory of his reign in his kingdom of grace; which is more peculiarly the kingdom that he possesses as Head of the church, and is that kingdom wherein she is more especially interested. It was especially to reign in this kingdom, that God the Father exalted him to his throne in heaven: he set his King on his holy hill of Zion, especially that he might reign over Zion, or over his church, in his kingdom of grace; and that he might be under the best advantages to carry on the designs of his love in this lower world. And therefore undoubtedly the saints in heaven are partakers with Christ in the joy and glory of the advancement and prosperity of his kingdom of grace on earth,
and success of his gospel here, which he looks on as the peculiar glory of his reign.

The good shepherd rejoices when he finds but one sheep that was lost; and his friends and neighbors in heaven rejoice with him on that occasion. That part of the family that is in heaven is surely not unacquainted with the affairs of that part of the same family that is on earth. They that are with the King and are next to him, the royal family, that dwell in his palace, are not kept in ignorance of the affairs of his kingdom. The saints in heaven are with the angels, the King's ministers, by which he manages the affairs of his kingdom, and who are continually ascending and descending from heaven to the earth, and one or other of them daily employed as ministering spirits to each individual member of the church below: besides the continual ascending of the souls of departed saints from all parts of the militant church. On these accounts the saints in heaven must needs be under a thousand times greater advantage than we here for a full view of the state of the church on earth, and a speedy, direct, and certain acquaintance with all its affairs in every part. And that which gives them much greater advantage for such an acquaintance than the things already mentioned, is their being constantly in the immediate presence of Christ, and in the enjoyment of the most perfect intercourse with him, who is the King who manages all these affairs, and has an absolutely perfect knowledge of them. Christ is the head of the whole glorified assembly; they are mystically his glorified body: and what the head sees, it sees for the information of the whole body, according to its capacity: and what the head enjoys, is for the joy of the whole body.

The saints, in leaving this world, and ascending to heaven, do not go out

of sight of things appertaining to Christ's kingdom on earth; but, on the contrary, they go out of a state of obscurity, and ascend above the mists and clouds into the clearest light: to a pinnacle in the very centre of light, where every thing appears in clear view. They have as much greater advantage to view the state of Christ's kingdom, and the works of the new creation here, than while they were in this world, as a man that ascends to the top of a high mountain has a greater advantage to view the face of the earth, than he had while he was in a deep valley, or thick forest below, surrounded on every side with those things that impeded and limited his sight. Nor do they view as indifferent or unconcerned spectators, any more than Christ himself is an unconcerned spectator.

The happiness of the saints in heaven consists very much in beholding the glory of God appearing in the work of redemption: for it is by this chiefly that God manifests his glory, the glory of his wisdom, holiness, grace, and other perfections, to both saints and angels; as is apparent by many Scriptures. And therefore undoubtedly their happiness consists very much in beholding the progress of this work in its application and success, and the steps by which infinite power and wisdom bring it to its consummation. And the saints in heaven are under unspeakably greater advantage to take the pleasure of beholding

the progress of this work on earth than we are that are here; as they are under greater advantages to see and understand the marvellous steps that Divine Wisdom takes in all that is done, and the glorious ends he obtains, the opposition Satan makes, and how he is baffled and overthrown. They can better see the connection of one event with another, and the beautiful order of all things that come to pass in the church in different ages that to us appear like confusion. Nor do they only view these things, and rejoice in them, as a glorious and beautiful sight, but as persons interested, as Christ is interested; as possessing these things in Christ, and reigning with him, in this kingdom. Christ's success in his work of redemption, in bringing home souls to himself, applying his saving benefits by his Spirit, and the advancement of the kingdom of grace in the world, is the reward especially promised to him by his Father in the covenant of redemption, for the hard and difficult service he performed while in the form of a servant; as is manifest by Isai. liii. 10, 11, 12. But the saints shall be rewarded with him: they shall partake with him in the joy of this reward; for this obedience that is thus rewarded is reckoned to them as they are

his members, as was before observed. This was especially the joy that was set before Christ, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame. And his joy is the joy of all heaven. They that are with him in heaven are under much the greatest advantages to partake with him in this joy; for they have a perfect communion with him through whom, and in fellowship with whom, they enjoy and possess their whole inheritance, all their heavenly happiness; as much as the whole body has all its pleasure of music by the ear, and all the pleasure of its food by the mouth and stomach; and all the benefit and refreshment of the air by the lungs. The saints while on earth pray and labor for the same thing that Christ labored for, viz., the advancement of the kingdom of God among men, the promoting of the prosperity of Zion, and flourishing of religion in this world; and most of them have suffered for that end as Christ did, have been made partakers with their head in his sufferings, and "filled up (as the apostle expresses it) that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ:" and therefore they shall partake with him of the glory and joy of the end obtained. Rom. viii. 17, "We are joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Christ, when his sufferings were past, and he left the earth and ascended into heaven, was so far from having done with kingdom in this world, that it was as it were but then begun: and he ascended for that very end, that he might more fully possess and enjoy this kingdom, that he might reign in it, and be under the best advantages for it; as much as a king ascends a throne in order to reign over his people, and receive the honor and glory of his dominion. No more have the saints done with Christ's kingdom on earth, when they leave the earth and ascend into heaven. "Christ came (i.e., ascended) with clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was brought near before him, to the very end, that he might receive dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him," Dan. vii. 13, 14. Which shall be eminently fulfilled after the ruin of Antichrist, which is especially the time of Christ's kingdom. And the same is the time when "the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God;" as verse 27, in the same chapter. It is because they shall reign in and with Christ, the Most High, as seems intimated in the words that follow; "whose kingdom is an

everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." This verse is true, not only of the saints on earth, but also the saints in heaven. Hence the saints in heaven, having respect to this time, do sing, in Rev. v. 10, "We shall reign on the earth." And agreeably hereto, it is afterwards represented, that when the forementioned time comes, the souls of them that in former ages had suffered with Christ do reign with Christ; having as it were given to them new life and joy, in that spiritual blessed resurrection, which shall then be of the church of God on earth; and thus it is that it is said, Matt. v. 5, "The meek (those that meekly and patiently suffer with Christ, and for his sake) shall inherit the earth:" they shall inherit it, and reign on earth with Christ. Christ is the heir of the world; and when the appointed time of his kingdom comes, his inheritance shall be given him, and then the meek, who are joint heirs, shall inherit the earth. The place in the Old Testament whence the words are taken, leads to a true interpretation of them. Psal. xxxvii. 11, "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." That there is reference in these latter words, "the abundance of peace," to the peace and blessedness of the latter days, we may be satisfied by comparing these words with Psal. lxxii. 7," In his days shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth:" and Jer. xxxiii. 6, "I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth:" also Isai. ii. 4, Micah iv. 3, Isai. xi. 6--9, and many other parallel places.

The saints in heaven will be as much with Christ in reigning over the nations, and in the glory of his dominion at that time, as they will he with him in the honor of judging the world at the last day. That promise of Christ to his disciples, Matt. xix. 28, 29, seems to have a special respect to the former of these. In verse 28, Christ promises to the disciples, that hereafter, "when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The saints in heaven reigning on earth in the glorious latter day, is described in language accommodated to this promise of Christ, Rev. xx. 4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given them. And they reigned with Christ." And the promise in the next verse, in that xixth of Matthew, seems to have its fulfillment at the same time: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life;" i.e., in the time when the saints shall inherit

the earth and reign on earth, the earth, with all its blessings and good things, shall be given in great abundance to the church, to be possessed by the saints. This shall they receive in this present world, and in the time to come everlasting life. The saints in heaven shall partake with Christ in the triumph and glory of those victories that he shall obtain in that future glorious time, over the kings and nations of the world, that are sometimes represented by his ruling them with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Which doubtless there is respect to in Rev. ii. 26, 27: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers:) even as I received of my Father." And Psal. cxlix. 5, to the end: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds;" i.e., in their separate state after death; compare Isai. lvii. 1, 2. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand: to execute vengeance upon the Heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with
fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all the saints." Accordingly when Christ appears riding forth to his victory over Antichrist, Rev. xix., the hosts of heaven appear going forth with him in robes of triumph, verse 14. And when Antichrist is destroyed, the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets, are called upon to rejoice, chap. xviii. 20. And accordingly the whole multitude of the inhabitants of heaven, on that occasion, do appear to exult and praise God with exceeding joy, chap. xix. 1Ñ8, and chap. xi. 15; and are also represented as greatly rejoicing on occasion of the ruin of the heathen empire, in the days of Constantine, chap xii. 10.And it is observable all along in the visions of that book, the hosts of heaven appear as much concerned and interested in the events appertaining to the kingdom of Christ here below, as the saints on earth. The day of the commencement of the church's latter day glory is eminently "the day of Christ's espousals; the day of the gladness of his heart, when as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so he will rejoice over his church." And then will all heaven exceedingly rejoice with him. And therefore they say at that time, Rev. xix. 7, "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come."

Thus Abraham enjoys these things when they come to pass, that were of old promised to him, and that he saw beforehand, and rejoiced in. He will enjoy the fulfilment of the promise of all the families of the earth being blessed in his seed, when it shall be accomplished. And all the ancient patriarchs, who died in faith of promises of glorious things that should be accomplished in this world, "who had not received the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," do actually enjoy them when fulfilled. David actually saw and enjoyed the fulfilment of that promise, in its due time, which was made to him many hundred years before, and was all his salvation and all his desire. Thus Daniel shall stand in his lot at the end of the days pointed out by his own prophecy. Thus the saints of old that died in faith, not having received the promises, are made perfect, and have their faith crowned by the better things accomplished in these latter days of the gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40, which they see and enjoy in their time.

3. The departed souls of saints have fellowship with Christ, in his blessed and eternal employment of glorifying the Father.The happiness of heaven consists not only in contemplation, and a mere passive enjoyment, but consists very much in action. And particularly in actively serving and glorifying God. This is expressly mentioned as a great part of the blessedness of the saints in their most perfect state, Rev. xxii. 3: "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." The angels are as a flame of fire in their ardor and activity in God's service: the four animals, Rev. iv. (which are generally supposed to signify the angels), are represented as continually giving praise and glory to God, and are said not to rest day nor night, verse 8. The souls of departed saints are, doubtless, become as the angels of God in heaven in this respect. And Jesus Christ is the head of the whole glorious assembly; as in other things appertaining to their blessed state, so in this of their praising and glorifying the Father. When Christ, the night before he was crucified, prayed for his exaltation to glory, it was that he might glorify the Father: John xvii. 1, "These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." And this he doubtless does, now he is in heaven; not only in fulfilling the Father's will, in what he does as head of the church and ruler of the universe, but also in leading the heavenly assembly in their praises. When Christ

instituted the Supper, and ate and drank with his disciples at his table (giving them therein a representation and pledge of their future feasting with him, and drinking new wine in his heavenly Father's kingdom), he at that time led them in their praises to God, in that hymn that they sang. And so doubtless he leads his glorified disciples in heaven. David was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and he led the great congregation of God's people in their songs of praise. Herein, as well as in innumerable other things, he was a type of Christ, who is often spoken of in Scripture by the name of David. And many of the psalms that David penned, were songs of praise, that he, by the spirit of prophecy, uttered in the name of Christ, as Head of the church, and leading the saints in their praises. Christ in heaven leads the glorious assembly in their praises to God, as Moses did the congregation of Israel at the Red Sea; which is implied in its being said, that "they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb," Rev. xv. 2, 3. In Rev. xix. 5, John tells us, that "he heard a voice come out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." Who can it be that utters this voice out of the throne, but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, calling on the glorious assembly of saints to praise his Father and their Father, his God and their God? And what the consequence of this voice is, we have an account in the next words: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of what has been said on this subject is of EXHORTATION. Let us all be exhorted hence earnestly to seek after that great privilege that has been spoken of, that when "we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord." We cannot continue always in these earthly tabernacles: they are very frail, and will soon decay and fall; and are continually liable to be overthrown by innumerable means: our souls must soon leave them, and go into the eternal world. O, how infinitely great will the privilege and happiness of such be, who at that time shall go to be with Christ in his glory, in the manner that has been represented! The privilege of the twelve disciples was great, in being so constantly with Christ as his family, in his state of humiliation. The

privilege of those three disciples was great, who were with him in the mount of his transfiguration; where was exhibited to them some little semblance of his future glory in heaven, such as they might behold in the present frail, feeble, and sinful state: they were greatly entertained and delighted with what they saw; and were for making tabernacles to dwell there, and return no more down the mount. And great was the privilege of Moses when he was with Christ in Mount Sinai, and besought him to show him his glory, and he saw his back parts as he passed by, and proclaimed his name. But is not that privilege infinitely greater, that has now been spoken of, the privilege of being with Christ in heaven, where he sits on the right hand of God, in the glory of the King and God of angels, and of the whole universe, shining forth as the great light, the bright sun of that world of glory; there to dwell in the full, constant and everlasting view of his beauty and brightness; there most freely and intimately to converse with him, and fully to enjoy his love, as his friends and spouse; there to have fellowship with him in the infinite pleasure and joy he has in the enjoyment of his Father; there to sit with him on his throne, and reign with him in the possession of all things, and partake with him in the joy and glory of his victory over his enemies, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, and to join with him in joyful songs of praise to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, forever and ever? Is not such a privilege worth the seeking after?

But here, as a special enforcement of this exhortation, I would improve that dispensation of God's holy providence, that is the sorrowful occasion of our coming together at this time, viz., the death of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, in the work of the gospel ministry, whose funeral is this day to be attended; together with what was observable in him, living and dying.In this dispensation of Providence, God puts us in mind of our mortality, and forewarns us that the time is approaching when we must be absent from the body, and "must all appear (as the apostle observes in the next verse but one to my text)before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad."And in him, whose death we are now called to consider and improve, we have not only an instance of mortality, but an instance of one that, being absent from the body, is present with the Lord; as we have all imaginable reason to conclude. And

that, whether we consider the nature of the operations he was under, about the time whence he dates his conversion, or the nature and course of his inward exercises from that time forward, or his outward conversation and long space wherein he looked death in the face.

His convictions of sin, preceding his first consolations in Christ (as appears by a written account he has left of his inward exercises and experiences), were exceeding deep and thorough: his trouble and exercise of mind, through a sense of guilt and misery, very great and long continued, but yet sound and solid; consisting in no unsteady, violent and unaccountable hurries and frights, and strange perturbations of mind; but arising from the most serious consideration, and proper illumination of the conscience to discern and consider the true state of things. And the light let into his mind at conversion, and the influences and exercises that his mind was subject to at that time, appear very agreeable to reason and the gospel of Jesus Christ; the change very great and remarkable, without any appearance of strong impressions on the imagination, sudden flights and pangs of the affections, and vehement emotions in animal nature; but attended with proper intellectual views of the supreme glory of the divine Being, consisting in the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfections of his nature, and of the transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by Christ. This was about eight years ago, when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Thus God sanctified and made meet for his use, that vessel that he intended to make eminently a vessel of honor in his house, and which he had made of large capacity, having endowed him with very uncommon abilities and gifts of nature. He was a singular instance of a ready invention, natural eloquence, easy flowing expression, sprightly apprehension, quick discerning, and a very strong memory; and yet of a very penetrating genius, close and clear thought, and piercing judgment. He had an exact taste: his understanding was (if I may so express it) of a quick, strong and distinguishing scent.

His learning was very considerable: he had a great taste for learning; and applied himself to his studies in so close a manner when he was at college, that he much injured his health; and was obliged on that account for a while to leave the college, throw by his studies and return home. He

was esteemed one that excelled in learning in that society. He had an extraordinary knowledge of men, as well as things. Had a great insight into human nature, and excelled most that ever I knew in a communicative faculty: he had a peculiar talent at accommodating himself to the capacities, tempers and circumstances, of those that he would instruct or counsel.He had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit: I never had opportunity to hear him preach, but have often heard him pray: and I think his manner of addressing himself to God, and expressing himself before him, in that duty, almost inimitable; such (so far as I may judge) as I have very rarely known equalled. He expressed himself with that exact propriety and pertinency, in such significant, weighty, pungent expressions; with that decent appearance of sincerity, reverence, and solemnity, and great distance from all affectation, as forgetting the presence of men, and as being in the immediate presence of a great and holy God, that I have scarcely ever known paralleled. And his manner of preaching, by what I have often heard of it from good judges, was no less excellent; being clear and instructive, natural, nervous, forcible, and moving, and very searching and convincing. He nauseated an affected noisiness, and violent boisterousness in the pulpit; and yet much disrelished a flat, cold delivery, when the subject of discourse, and matter delivered, required affection and earnestness.

Not only had he excellent talents for the study and the pulpit, but also for conversation. He was of a sociable disposition; and was remarkably free, entertaining, and profitable in ordinary discourse; and had much of a faculty of disputing, defending truth and confuting error.As he excelled in his judgment and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity. He was truly, for one of his standing, an extraordinary divine. But above all, in matters relating to experimental religion. In this, I know I have the concurring opinion of some that have had a name for persons of the best judgment. And according to what ability I have to judge things of this nature, and according to my opportunities, which of late have been very great, I never knew his equal, of his age and standing, for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from its various false appearances; which I suppose to be owing to these three things meeting together in him;--the strength of his natural genius, and the great opportunities he had of observation of others, in various

parts, both white people and Indians, and his own great experience.

His experiences of the holy influences of God's Spirit were not only great at his first conversion, but they were so, in a continued course, from that time forward; as appears by a record, or private journal, he kept of his daily inward exercises, from the time of his conversion, until he was disabled by the failing of his strength, a few days before his death. The change which he looked upon as his conversion, was not only a great change of the present views, affections, and frame of his mind; but was evidently the beginning of that work of God on his heart, which God carried on, in a very wonderful manner, from that time to his dying day. He greatly abhorred the way of such, as live on their first work, as though they had now got through their work, and are thence forward, by degrees, settled in a cold, lifeless, negligent,worldly frame; he had an ill opinion of such persons' religion.[2]

Oh that the things that were seen and heard in this extraordinary person, his holiness, heavenliness, labor and self-denial in life, his so remarkably devoting himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the glory of God, and the wonderful frame of mind manifested, in so steadfast a manner, under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on, may excite in us all, both ministers and people, a due sense of the greatness of the work we have to do in the world, the excellency and amiableness of thorough religion in experience and practice, and the blessedness of the end of such, whose death finishes such a life, and the infinite value of their eternal reward, when absent from the body and present with the Lord; and effectually stir us up to endeavors, that in the way of such a holy life we may at least come to so blessed an end. AMEN.

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Many Mansions

"In My Father's house are many mansions."--John 14:2

In these words may be observed two things,

1. The thing described, viz., Christ's Father's house. Christ spoke to his disciples in the foregoing chapter as one that was about to leave them. He told 'em, verse 31, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him," and then goes to giving of them counsel to live in unity and love one another, as one that was going from them. By which they seemed somewhat surprised and hardly knew what to make of it. And one of them, viz., Peter, asked him where he was going; verse 36, "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord whither goest thou?" Christ did not directly answer and tell him where he was going, but he signifies where in these words afterwards, in the verse 12, he tells 'em plainly that he was going to his Father.

2. We may observe the description given of it, viz., that in it there are many mansions. The disciples seemed very sorrowful at the news of Christ's going away, but Christ comforts 'em with that, that in his Father's house where he was going there was not only room for him, but room for them too. There were many mansions. There was not only a mansion there for him, but there were mansions enough for them all; there was room enough in heaven for them. When the disciples perceived that Christ was going away, they manifested a great desire to go with him, and particularly Peter. Peter in the latter part of the foregoing chapter asked him whither he went to that end that he might follow him. Christ told him that whither he went he could not follow him now, but that he should follow him afterwards. But Peter, not content with Christ, seemed to have a great mind to follow him now. "Lord," says he, "why cannot I follow thee now?" So that the disciples had a great mind still to be with Christ, and Christ in the words of the text intimates that they shall be with him. Christ signifies to 'em that he was going home to his Father's house, and he encourages 'em that they shall be with him there in due time, in that there were many mansions there. There was a mansion provided not only for him, but for them all (for Judas was not then present), and not only

for them, but for all that should ever believe in him to the end of the world; and though he went before, he only went to prepare a place for them that should follow.

The text is a plain sentence; 'tis therefore needless to press any doctrine in other words from it: so that I shall build my discourse on the words of the text. There are two propositions contained in the words, viz.,

I. that heaven is God's house, and

II. that in this house of God there are many mansions.

Prop. I. Heaven is God's house. An house of public worship is an house where God's people meet from time to time to attend on God's ordinances, and that is set apart for that and is called God's house. The temple of Solomon was called God's house. God was represented as dwelling there. There he has his throne in the holy of holies, even the mercy seat over the ark and between the cherubims.

Sometimes the whole universe is represented in Scripture as God's house, built with various stories one above another: Amos 9:6, "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven;" and Psalm 104:3, "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters." But the highest heaven is especially represented in Scripture as the house of God. As to other parts of the creation, God hath appointed them to inferior uses; but this part he has reserved for himself for his own abode. We are told that the heavens are the Lord's, but the earth he hath given to the sons of men. God, though he is everywhere present, is represented both in Old Testament and New as being in heaven is a special and peculiar manner. Heaven is the temple of God. Thus we read of God's temple in heaven, Revelation 15:5. Solomon's temple was a type of heaven. The apostle Paul is his epistle to the Hebrews does from time to time call heaven the holy of holies, as being the antitype not only of the temple of Solomon, but of the most holy place in that temple, which was the place of God's most immediate residence: Hebrews 9:12, "He entered in once into the holy place;" verse 24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself." Houses where assemblies of Christians worship God are in some respects figures of this house of God

above. When God is worshipped in them in spirit and truth, they become the outworks of heaven and as it were its gates. As in houses of public worship here there are assemblies of Christians meeting to worship God, so in heaven there is a glorious assembly, or Church, continually worshipping God: Hebrews 12:22,23, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, [and unto] the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, that are written in heaven."

Heaven is represented in Scripture as God's dwelling-house; Psalm 113:5, "Who is like [unto] the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high," and Psalm 123:1, "Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens." Heaven is God's palace. 'Tis the house of the great King of the universe; there he has his throne, which is therefore represented as his house or temple; Psalm 11:4, "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven."

Heaven is the house where God dwells with his family. God is represented in Scripture as having a family; and though some of this family are now on earth, yet in so being they are abroad and not at home, but all going home: Ephesians 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Heaven is the place that God has built for himself and his children. God has many children, and the place designed for them is heaven; therefore the saints, being the children of God, are said to be of the household of God, Ephesians 2:19: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." God is represented as a householder or head of a family, and heaven is his house.

Heaven is the house not only where God hath his throne, but also where he doth as it were keep his table, where his children sit down with him at his table and where they are feasted in a royal manner becoming the children of so great a King: Luke 22:30, "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom;" Matthew 26:29, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

God is the King of kings, and heaven is the place where he keeps his

court. There are his angels and archangels that as the nobles of his court do attend upon him.

Prop. II. There are many mansions in the house of God. By many mansions is meant many seats or places of abode. As it is a king's palace, there are many mansions. Kings' houses are wont to be built very large, with many stately rooms and apartments. So there are many mansions in God's house.

When this is spoken of heaven, it is chiefly to be understood in a figurative sense, and the following things seem to be taught us in it.

1. There is room in this house of God for great numbers. There is room in heaven for a vast multitude, yea, room enough for all mankind that are or ever shall be; Luke 14:22, "Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."

It is not with the heavenly temple as it often is with houses of public worship in this world, that they fill up and become too small and scanty for those that would meet in them, so that there is not convenient room for all. There is room enough in our heavenly Father's house. This is partly what Christ intended in the words of the text, as is evident from the occasion of his speaking them. The disciples manifested a great desire to be where Christ was, and Christ therefore, to encourage them that it should be as they desired, tells them that in his Father's house where he was going were many mansions, i.e., room enough for them.

There is mercy enough in God to admit an innumerable multitude into heaven. There is mercy enough for all, and there is merit enough in Christ to purchase heavenly happiness for millions of millions, for all men that ever were, are or shall be. And there is a sufficiency in the fountain of heaven's happiness to supply and fill and satisfy all: and there is in all respects enough for the happiness of all.

2. There are sufficient and suitable accommodations for all the different sorts of persons that are in the world: for great and small, for high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise, bond and free, persons of all nations and all conditions and circumstances, for those that have been great

sinners as well as for moral livers; for weak saints and those that are babes in Christ as well as for those that are stronger and more grown in grace. There is in heaven a sufficiency for the happiness of every sort; there is a convenient accommodation for every creature that will hearken to the calls of the Gospel. None that will come to Christ, let his condition be what it will, need to fear but that Christ will provide a place suitable for him in heaven.

This seems to be another thing implied in Christ's words. The disciples were persons of very different condition from Christ: he was their Master, and there were his disciples; he was their Lord, and there were the servants; he was their Guide, and they were the followers; he was their Captain, and they the soldiers; he was the Shepherd, and they the sheep; [he was, as it were, the] Father, [and they the] children; he was the glorious, holy Son of God, they were the poor, sinful, corrupt men. But yet, though they were in such different circumstances from him, yet Christ encourages them that there shall not only be room in heaven for him, but for them too; for there were many mansions there. There was not only a mansion to accommodate the Lord, but the disciples also; not only the head, but the members; not only the Son of God, but those that are naturally poor, sinful, corrupt men: as in a king's palace there is not only a mansion or room of state built for the king himself and for his eldest son and heir, but there are many rooms, mansions for all his numerous household, children, attendants and servants.

3. It is further implied that heaven is a house that was actually built and prepared for a great multitude. When God made heaven in the beginning of the world, he intended it for an everlasting dwelling-place for a vast and innumerable multitude. When heaven was made , it was intended and prepared for all those particular persons that God had from eternity designed to save: Matthew 25:34, "Come, ye blessed [of my Father, inherit the Kingdom] prepared for you [from the foundation of the world]." And that is a very great and innumerable multitude: Revelation 7:9, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes." Heaven being built designedly for these was built accordingly; it was built

so as most conveniently to accommodate all this multitude: as a house that is built for a great family is built large and with many rooms in it; as a palace that is built for a great king that keeps a great court with many attendants is built exceeding great with a great many apartments; and as an house of public worship that is built for a great congregation is built very large with many seats in it.

4. When it is said, ["In my father's house are many mansions"], it is meant that there are seats of various dignity and different degrees and circumstances of honor and happiness. There are many mansions in God's house because heaven is intended for various degrees of honor and blessedness. Some are designed to sit in higher places there than others; some are designed to be advanced to higher degrees of honor and glory than others are; and, therefore, there are various mansions, and some more honorable mansions and seats, in heaven than others. Though they are all seats of exceeding honor and blessedness yet some are more so than others.

Thus a palace is built. Though every part of the palace is magnificent as becomes the palace of a king, yet there are many apartments of various honor, and some are more stately and costly than others, according to the degree of dignity. There is one apartment that is the king's presence-chamber; there are other apartments for the next heir to the crown; there are others for other children; and others for their attendants and the great officers of the household: one for the high steward, and another for the chamberlain, and others for meaner officers and servants.

Another image of this was in Solomon's temple. There were many mansions of different degrees of honor and dignity. There was the holy of holies, where the ark was that was the place of God's immediate residence, where the high priest alone might come; and there was another apartment called the holy place, where the other priests might come; and next to that was the inner court of the temple, where the Levites were admitted: and there they had many chambers or mansions built for lodging-rooms for the priests; and next to that was the court of Israel where the people of Israel might come; and next to that was the court of the Gentiles where the Gentiles, those that were called the "Proselytes of the Gate," might come.

And we have an image of this in houses built for the worship of Christian assemblies. In such houses of God there are many seats of different honor and dignity, from the most honorable to the most inferior of the congregation.

Not that we are to understand the words of Christ so much in a literal sense, as that every saint in heaven was to have a certain seat or room or place of abode where he was to be locally fixed. 'Tis not the design of the Scriptures to inform us much about the external circumstances of heaven or the state of heaven locally considered; but we are to understand what Christ says chiefly in a spiritual sense. Persons shall be set in different degrees of honor and glory in heaven, as is abundantly manifested in Scripture: which may fitly be represented to our imaginations by there being different seats of honor, as it was in the temple, as it is in kings' courts. Some seats shall be nearer the throne than others. Some shall sit next to Christ in glory: Matthew 20:23, "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

Christ has doubtless respect to these different degrees of glory in the text. When he was going to heaven and the disciples were sorrowful at the thoughts of parting with their Lord, he lets them know that there are seats or mansions of various degrees of honor in his Father's house, that there was not only one for him, who was the Head of the Church and the elder brother, but also for them that were his disciples and younger brethren.

Christ also may probably have respect not only to different degrees of glory in heaven, but different circumstances. Though the employment and happiness of all the heavenly assembly shall in the general be the same, yet 'tis not improbable that there may be circumstantial difference. We know what their employment [is] in general, but not in particular. We know not how one may be employed to subserve and promote the happiness of another, and all to help one another. Some may there be set in one place for one office or employment, and others [in] another, as 'tis in the Church on earth. God hath set every one in the body as it hath pleased him; one is the eye, another the ear, another the head, etc. But

because God has not been pleased expressly to reveal how it shall be in this respect, therefore I shall not insist upon it, but pass to make some

IMPROVEMENT

of what has been offered.

I. Here is encouragement for sinners that are concerned and exercised for the salvation of their souls, such as are afraid that they shall never go to heaven or be admitted to any place of abode there, and are sensible that they are hitherto in a doleful state and condition in that they are out of Christ, and so have no right to any inheritance in heaven, but are in danger of going to hell and having their place of eternal abode fixed there. You may be encouraged by what has been said, earnestly to seek heaven; for there are many mansions there. There is room enough there. Let your case be what it will, there is suitable provision there for you; and if you come to Christ, you need not fear that he will prepare a place for you; he'll see to it that you shall be well accommodated in heaven.

But II. I would improve this doctrine in a twofold exhortation.

1. Let all be hence exhorted earnestly to seek that they may be admitted to a mansion in heaven. You have heard that this is God's house; it is his temple. If David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah and in the land of Geshur and of the Philistines, so longed that he might again return into the land of Israel that he might have a place in the house of God here on earth, and prized a place there so much, though it was but that of a door-keeper, how great a happiness will it be to have a place in this heavenly temple of God! If they are looked upon as enjoying a high privilege that have a seat appointed them in kings' courts or in apartments in kings' palaces, especially those that have an abode there in the quality of the king's children, then how great a privilege will it be to have an apartment or mansion assigned to us in God's heavenly palace, and to have a place there as his children! How great is their glory and honor that are admitted to be of the household of God!

And seeing there are many mansions there, mansions enough for us all, our folly will be the greater if we neglect to seek a place in heaven, having

our minds foolishly taken up about the worthless, fading things of this world. Here consider three things:

(1) How little a while you can have any mansion or place of abode in this world. Now you have a dwelling amongst the living. You have a house or mansion of your own, or at least one that is at present for your use, and now you have a seat in the house of God; but how little a while will this continue! In a very little while, and the place that now knows you in this world will know you no more. The habitation you have here will be empty of you; you will be carried dead out of it, or shall die at a distance from it, and never enter into it any more, or into any other abode in this world. Your mansion or place of abode in this world, however convenient or commodious it may be, is but as a tent that shall soon be taken down, but a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. Your stay is as it were but for a night. Your body itself is but a house of clay which will quickly moulder and tumble down, and you shall have no other habitation here in this world but the grave.

Thus God in his providence is putting you in mind by the repeated instances of death that have been in the town within the two weeks past, both in one house: in which death he has shown his dominion over old and young. The son was taken away first before the father, being in his full strength and flower of his days; and the father, who was then well and having no appearance of approaching death, followed in a few days: and their habitation and their seat in the house of God in this world will know them no more.

Take warning by these warnings of Providence to improve your time that you may have a mansion in heaven. We have a house of worship newly created amongst us which now you have a seat in, and probably are pleased with the ornaments of it; and though you have a place in so comely a house, yet you know not how little a while you shall have a place in this house of God. Here are a couple snatched away by death that had met in it but a few times, that have been snatched out of it before it was fully finished and never will have any more a seat in it. You know not how soon you may follow, and then of great importance will it be to you to have a seat in God's house above. Both of the persons lately deceased were much on their death-beds warning others to improve their precious

time. The first of them was much in expressing his sense of the vast importance of an interest in Christ, as I was a witness, and was earnest in calling on others to improve their time, to be thorough, to get an interest in Christ, and seemed very desirous that young people might receive council and warning from him, as the words of a dying man, to do their utmost to make sure of conversion; and a little before he died left a request to me that I would warn the young people in his room. God had been warning of you in his death and the death of his father that so soon followed. The words of dying persons should be of special weight with us, for then they are in circumstances wherein they are most capable to look on things as they are and judge aright of 'em,--between both worlds as it were. Still that we must all be in.

Let our young people, therefore, take warning from hence, and don't be such fools as to neglect seeking a place and mansion in heaven. Young persons are especially apt to be taken with the pleasing things of this world. You are now, it may be, much pleased with hopes of your future circumstances in this world; [and you are now, it may be, much] pleased with the ornaments of that house of worship that you with others have a place in. But, alas, do you not too little consider how soon you may be taken away from all these things, and no more forever have any part in any mansion or house or enjoyment or happiness under the sun? Therefore let it be your main care to secure an everlasting habitation for hereafter.

(2) Consider when you die, if you have no mansion in the house of God in heaven, you must have your place of abode in the habitation of devils. There is no middle place between them, and when you go hence, you must go to one or the other of these. Some have a mansion prepared for them in heaven from the foundation [of the world]; others are sent away as cursed into everlasting burnings prepared for the [devil and his angels]. Consider how miserable those must be that shall have their habitation with devils to all eternity. Devils are foul spirits; God's great enemies. Their habitation is the blackness of darkness; a place of the utmost filthiness, abomination, darkness, disgrace and torment, O, how would you rather ten thousand times have no place of abode at all, have no being, than to have a place [with devils]!

(3) If you die unconverted, you will have the worse place in hell for having had a seat or place in God's house in this world. As there are many mansions, places of different degrees of honor in heaven, so there are various abodes and places or degrees of torment and misery in hell; and those will have the worst place there that [dying unconverted, have had the best place in God's house here]. Solomon speaks of a peculiarly awful sight that he had seen, that of a wicked man buried that had gone [from the place of the holy], Ecclesiastes 8:10. Such as have had a seat in God's house, have been in a sense exalted up to heaven, set on the gate of heaven, [if they die unconverted, shall be] cast down to hell.

2. The second exhortation that I would offer from what has been said is to seek a high place in heaven. Seeing there are many mansions of different degrees of honor and dignity in heaven, let us seek to obtain a mansion of distinguished glory. 'Tis revealed to us that there are different degrees of glory to that end that we might seek after the higher degrees. God offered high degrees of glory to that end, that we might seek them by eminent holiness and good works: 2 Corinthians 9:6, "He that sows sparingly [shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully]." It is not becoming persons to be over anxious about an high seat in God's house in this world, for that is the honor that is of men; but we can't too earnestly seek after an high seat in God's house above, by seeking eminent holiness, for that is the honor that is of God.

'Tis very little worth the while for us to pursue after honor in this world, where the greatest honor is but a bubble and will soon vanish away, and death will level all. Some have more stately houses than others, and some are in higher office than others, and some are richer than others and have higher seats in the meeting-house than others; but all graves are upon a level. One rotting, putrefying corpse is as ignoble as another; the worms are as bold with one carcass as another.

But the mansions in God's house above are everlasting mansions. Those that have seats allotted 'em there, whether of greater or lesser dignity, whether nearer or further from the throne, will hold 'em to all eternity. This is promised, Revelation 3:12 :"Him that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple [of my God, and he shall go no more out]." If it be

worth the while to desire and seek high seats in the meeting-house, where you are one day in a week, and where you shall never come but few days in all; if it be worth the while much to prize one seat above another in the house of worship only because it is the pew or seat that is ranked first in number, and to be seen here for a few days, how will it be worth the while to seek an high mansion in God's temple and in that glorious place that is the everlasting habitation of God and all his children! You that are pleased with your seats in this house because you are seated high or in a place that is looked upon honorable by those that sit round about, and because many can behold you, consider how short a time you will enjoy this pleasure. And if there be any that are not suited in their seats because they are too low for them, let them consider that it is but a very little while before it will [be] all one to you whether you have sat high or low here. But it will be of infinite and everlasting concern to you where your seat is in another world. Let your great concern be while in this world so to improve your opportunities in God's house in this world, whether you sit high or low, as that you may have a distinguished and glorious mansion in God's house in heaven, where you may be fixed in your place in that glorious assembly in an everlasting rest.

Let the main thing that we prize in God's house be, not the outward ornaments of it, or a high seat in it, but the word of God and his ordinances in it. And spend your time here in seeking Christ, that he may prepare a place for you in his Father's house, that when he comes again to this world, he may take you to himself, that where he is, there you may be also.

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Heaven, a World of Love

"Charity never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." -- **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**

From the first of these verses, I have already drawn the doctrine, that that great fruit of the Spirit in which the Holy Ghost shall not only for a season, but everlastingly, be communicated to the church of Christ, is charity or divine love. And now I would consider the same verse in connection with the two that follow it, and upon the three verses would make two observations.

First, that it is mentioned as one great excellence of charity, that it shall remain when all other fruits of the Spirit have failed. And,

Second, that this will come to pass in the perfect state of the church, when that which is in part shall bedone away, and that which is perfect is come.

There is a twofold *imperfect,* and so a twofold *perfect* state of the Christian church. The church in its beginning, or in its first stage, before it was strongly established in the world, and settled in its New Testament state, and before the canon of Scripture was completed, was in an imperfect state — a state, as it were, of childhood, in comparison with what it was to be in its elder and later ages, when it should have reached its state of manhood, or of comparative earthly perfection. And so, again, this comparatively perfect church of Christ, so long as it remains in its militant state, that is, down to the end of time, will still be in an imperfect, and, as it were, in a childish state, in comparison with what it will be in its heavenly state, in which latter it is comparatively in its state of manhood or perfection.

And so there is a twofold failing of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit here mentioned. One was at the end of the first or infant age of the church, when the canon of Scripture was completed, and so there was to be no need of such gifts for the church in its latter ages, when it should have put away childish things, and come to a state of manhood before the end of the world, and when the Spirit of God should most gloriously be poured out and manifested in that love or charity, which is its greatest and everlasting fruit. And the other will be, when all the common fruits of

the Spirit cease with respect to particular persons at death, and with .respect to the whole church at the end of the world, while charity shall still remain in heaven, and there the Spirit of God shall be poured forth and manifested in perfect love in every heart to all eternity.

The apostle, in the context, seems to have respect to both these states of the church, but especially to the latter. For though the glorious state of the church in its latter age on earth, will be perfect in comparison with its former state, yet its state in heaven is that state of the church to which the expressions of the apostle seem most agreeable, when he says, “When that which is perfect is come,” etc., and, “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.” The doctrine, then, that I would draw from the text is, that

HEAVEN IS A WORLD OF CHARITY OR LOVE.

The apostle speaks, in the text, of a state of the church when it is perfect in heaven, and therefore a state in which the Holy Spirit shall be more perfectly and abundantly given to the church than it is now on earth. But the way in which it shall be given when it is so abundantly poured forth, will be in that great fruit of the Spirit, holy and divine love, in the hearts of all the blessed inhabitants of that world. So that the heavenly state of the church is a state that is distinguished from its earthly state, as it is that state which God has designed especially for such a communication of his Holy Spirit, and in which it shall be given perfectly, whereas, in the present state of the church, it is given with great imperfection. And it is also a state in which this holy love or charity shall be, as it were, the only gift or fruit of the Spirit, as being the most perfect and glorious of all, and which, being brought to perfection, renders all other gifts that God was wont to bestow on his church on earth, needless. And that we may the better see how heaven is thus a world of holy love, I would consider, *first,* the great cause and fountain of love that is in heaven; *second,* the objects of love that it contains; *third,* the subjects of that love; *fourth,* its principle, or the love itself; *fifth,* the excellent circumstances in which it is there exercised and expressed and enjoyed; and, *sixth,* the happy effects and fruits of all this. And,

I. *The* CAUSE *and* FOUNTAIN *of love in heaven.* — Here I remark that the God of love himself dwells in heaven. Heaven is the palace or presence-chamber of the high and holy One, whose name is love, and who is both the cause and source of all holy love. God, considered with respect to his essence, is everywhere — he fills both heaven and earth. But yet he is said, in some respects, to be more especially in some places than in others. He was said of old to dwell in the land of Israel, above all other lands; and in Jerusalem, above all other cities of that land; and in the temple, above all other buildings in the city; and in the holy of holies, above all other apartments of the temple; and on the mercy seat, over the ark of the covenant, above all other places in the holy of holies. But heaven is his dwelling-place above all other places in the universe; and all those places in which he was said to dwell of old, were but types of this. Heaven is a part of creation that God has built for this end, to be the place of his glorious presence, and it is his abode forever; and here will he dwell, and gloriously manifest himself to all eternity.

And this renders heaven a world of love; for God is the fountain of love, as the sun is the fountain of light. And therefore the glorious presence of God in heaven, fills heaven with love, as the sun, placed in the midst of the visible heavens in a clear day, fills the world with light. The apostle tells us that "God is love;" and therefore, seeing he is an infinite being, it follows that he is an infinite fountain of love. Seeing he is an all-sufficient being, it follows that he is a full and over-flowing, and inexhaustible fountain of love. And in that he is an unchangeable and eternal being, he is an unchangeable and eternal fountain of love.

There, even in heaven, dwells the God from whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is, or ever was, proceeds. There dwells God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, united as one, in infinitely dear, and incomprehensible, and mutual, and eternal love. There dwells God the Father, who is the father of mercies, and so the father of love, who so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son to die for it. There dwells Christ, the Lamb of God, the prince of peace and of love, who so loved the world that he shed his blood, and poured out his soul unto death for men. There dwells the great Mediator, through whom all the divine love is expressed toward men, and by whom the fruits of that love have been

purchased, and through whom they are communicated, and through whom love is imparted to the hearts of all God's people. There dwells Christ in both his natures, the human and the divine, sitting on the same throne with the Father. And there dwells the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of divine love, in whom the very essence of God, as it were, flows out, and is breathed forth in love, and by whose immediate influence all holy love is shed abroad in the hearts of all the saints on earth and in heaven. There, in heaven, this infinite fountain of love — this eternal Three in One — is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it, as it flows forever. There this glorious God is manifested, and shines forth, in full glory, in beams of love. And there this glorious fountain forever flows forth in streams, yea, in rivers of love and delight, and these rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of love, in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it were, be deluged with love! Again, I would consider heaven, with regard,

II. *To the* OBJECTS *of love that it contains.* — Andhere I would observe three things: —

1. *There are none but lovely objects in heaven.* — No. odious, or unlovely, or polluted person or thing is to be seen there. There is nothing there that is wicked or unholy. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). And there is nothing that is deformed with any natural or moral deformity; but everything is beauteous to behold, and amiable and excellent in itself. The God that dwells and gloriously manifests himself there, is infinitely lovely; gloriously lovely as a heavenly Father, as a divine Redeemer, and as a holy Sanctifier.

All the persons that belong to the blessed society of heaven are lovely. The Father of the family is lovely, and so are all his children; the head of the body lovely, and so are all the members. Among the angels there are none that are unlovely — for they are all holy; and no evil angels are suffered to infest heaven as they do this world, but they are kept forever at a distance by that great gulf which is between them and the glorious world of love. And among all the company of the saints, there are no unlovely persons.

There are no false professors or hypocrites there; none that pretend to be saints, and yet are of an unchristian and hateful spirit or behavior, as is often the case in this world; none whose gold has not been purified from its dross; none who are not lovely in themselves and to others. There is no one object there to give offense, or at any time to give occasion for any passion or emotion of hatred or dislike, but every object there shall forever draw forth love.

And not only shall all objects in heaven be lovely, but,

2. *They shall be perfectly lovely.* — There are many things in this world that in the general are lovely, but yet are not perfectly free from that which is the contrary. There are spots on the sun; and so there are many men that are most amiable and worthy to be loved, who yet are not without some things that are disagreeable and unlovely. Often there is in good men some defect of temper, or character, or conduct, that mars the excellence of what otherwise would seem most amiable; and even the very best of men, are, on earth, imperfect. But it is not so in heaven. There shall be no pollution, or deformity, or unamiable defect of any kind, seen in any person or thing; but everyone shall be perfectly pure, and perfectly lovely in heaven. That blessed world shall be perfectly bright, without any darkness; perfectly fair, without any spot; perfectly clear, without any cloud. No moral or natural defect shall ever enter there; and there nothing will be seen that is sinful or weak or foolish; nothing, the nature or aspect of which is coarse or displeasing, or that can offend the most refined taste or the most delicate eye. No string shall there vibrate out of tune, to cause any jar in the harmony of the music of heaven; and no note be such as to make discord in the anthems of saints and angels.

The great God who so fully manifests himself there, is perfect with an absolute and infinite perfection. The Son of God, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, appears there in the fullness of his glory, without that garb of outward meanness in which he appeared in this world. The Holy Ghost shall there be poured forth with perfect richness and sweetness, as a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. And every member of that holy and blessed society shall be without any stain of sin, or imperfection, or

weakness, or imprudence, or blemish of any kind. The whole church, ransomed and purified, shall there be presented to Christ, as a bride, clothed in fine linen, clean and white, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Wherever the inhabitants of that blessed world shall turn their eyes, they shall see nothing but dignity, and beauty, and glory. The most stately cities on earth, however magnificent their buildings, yet have their foundations in the dust, and their streets dirty and defiled, and made to be trodden under foot; but the very streets of this heavenly city are of pure gold, like unto transparent glass, and its foundations are of precious stones, and its gates are pearls. And all these are but faint emblems of the purity and perfectness of those that dwell therein. And in heaven,

3. *Shall be all those objects that the saints have set their hearts upon, and which they have loved above all things while in this world.* — There they will find those things that appeared most lovely to them while they dwelt on earth; the things that met the approbation of their judgments, and captivated their affections, and drew away their souls from the most dear and pleasant of earthly objects. There they will find those things that were their delight here below, and on which they rejoiced to meditate, and with the sweet contemplation of which their minds were often entertained; and there, too, the things which they chose for their portion, and which were so dear to them that they were ready for the sake of them to undergo the severest sufferings, and to forsake even father, and mother, and kindred, and friends, and wife, and children, and life itself. All the truly great and good, all the pure and holy and excellent from this world, and it may be from every part of the universe, are constantly tending toward heaven. As the streams tend to the ocean, so all these are tending to the great ocean of infinite purity and bliss. The progress of time does but bear them on to its blessedness; and us, if we are holy, to be united to them there. Every gem which death rudely tears away from us here is a glorious jewel forever shining there; every Christian friend that goes before us from this world, is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above; there the Christian father, and mother, and wife, and child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be

commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end. There we shall have company with the patriarchs and fathers and saints of the Old and New Testaments, and those of whom the world was not worthy, with whom on earth we were only conversant by faith. And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier, and Guide, and Comforter; and shall be filled with all the fullness of the Godhead forever!

And such being the objects of love in heaven, I pass,

III. *To its subjects;* and these are, the hearts in which it dwells. — In every heart in heaven, love dwells and reigns. The heart of God is the original seat or subject of love. Divine love is in him, not as in a subject that receives it from another, but as in its original seat, where it is of itself. Love is in God, as light is in the sun, which does not shine by a reflected light, as the moon and planets do, but by its own light, and as the great fountain of light. And from God, love flows out toward all the inhabitants of heaven. It flows out, in the first place, necessarily and infinitely, toward his only-begotten Son; being poured forth, without mixture, as to an object that is infinite, and so fully adequate to all the fullness of a love that is infinite. And this infinite love is infinitely exercised toward him. Not only does the fountain send forth streams to this object, but the very fountain itself wholly and altogether goes out toward him. And the Son of God is not only the infinite object of love, but he is also an infinite subject of it. He is not only the beloved of the Father, but he infinitely loves him. The infinite essential love of God, is, as it were, an infinite and eternal, mutual, holy, energy between the Father and the Son: a pure and holy act, whereby the Deity becomes, as it were, one infinite and unchangeable emotion of love proceeding from both the Father and the Son. This divine love has its seat in the Deity, as it is exercised within the Deity, or in God toward himself.

But this love is not confined to such exercises as these. It flows out in innumerable streams toward all the created inhabitants of heaven, to all the saints and angels there. The love of God the Father flows out toward Christ the head, and to all the members through him, in whom they were

beloved before the foundation of the world, and in whom the Father's love was expressed toward them in time, by his death and sufferings, as it now is fully manifested in heaven. And the saints and angels are secondarily the subjects of holy love, not as those in whom it is as in an original seat, as light is in the sun, but as it is in the planets, that shine only by reflected light. And the light of their love is reflected in the first place, and chiefly, back to its great source. As God has given the saints and angels love, so their love is chiefly exercised towards God its fountain, as is most reasonable. They all love God with a supreme love. There is no enemy of God in heaven; but all, as his children, love him as their Father. They are all united, with one mind, to breathe forth their whole souls in love to God their eternal Father, and to Jesus Christ their common Redeemer, and head, and friend.

Christ loves all his saints in heaven. His love flows out to his whole church there, and to every individual member of it. And they all, with one heart and one soul, unite in love to their common Redeemer. Every heart is wedded to this holy and spiritual husband, and all rejoice in him, while the angels join them in their love. And the angels and saints all love each other. All the members of the glorious society of heaven are sincerely united. There is not a single secret or open enemy among them all. Not a heart is there that is not full of love, and not a solitary inhabitant that is not beloved by all the others. And as all are lovely, so all see each other's loveliness with full complacence and delight. Every soul goes out in love to every other; and among all the blessed inhabitants, love is mutual, and full, and eternal. I pass next to speak, as proposed,

IV. *Of the principle of love in heaven.* — And by this I mean, the love itself that fills and blesses the heavenly world, and which may be noticed both as to its nature and degree. And,

1. *As to its nature.* — In its nature, this love is altogether holy and divine. Most of the love that there is in this world is of an unhallowed nature. But the love that has place in heaven is not carnal but spiritual. It does not proceed from corrupt principles or selfish motives, nor is it directed to mean and vile purposes and ends. As opposed to all this, it is a pure flame, directed by holy motives, and aiming at no ends inconsistent with God's glory and the happiness of the universe. The saints in heaven love

God for his own sake, and each other for God's sake, and for the sake of the relation that they have to him, and the image of God that is upon them. All their love is pure and holy. We may notice this love, also,

2. *As to its degree.* — And in degree it is perfect. The love that dwells in the heart of God is perfect, with an absolutely infinite and divine perfection. The love of angels and saints to God and Christ, is perfect in its kind, or with such a perfection as is proper to their nature. It is perfect with a sinless perfection, and perfect in that it is commensurate to the capacities of their nature. So it is said in the text, that "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Their love shall be without any remains of any contrary principle, having no pride or selfishness to interrupt it or hinder its exercises. Their hearts shall be full of love. That which was in the heart on earth as but a grain of mustard-seed, shall be as a great tree in heaven. The soul that in this world had only a little spark of divine love in it, in heaven shall be, as it were, turned into a bright and ardent flame, like the sun in its fullest brightness, when it has no spot upon it.

In heaven there shall be no remaining enmity, or distaste, or coldness, or deadness of heart towards God and Christ. Not the least remainder of any principle of envy shall exist to be exercised toward angels or other beings who are superior in glory; nor shall there be aught like contempt or slighting of those who are inferiors. Those that have a lower station in glory than others, suffer no diminution of their own happiness by seeing others above them in glory. On the contrary, all the members of that blessed society rejoice in each other's happiness, for the love of benevolence is perfect in them all. Every one has not only a sincere, but a perfect goodwill to every other. Sincere and strong love is greatly gratified and delighted in the prosperity of the beloved object; and if the love be perfect, the greater the prosperity of the beloved is, the more is the lover pleased and delighted; for the prosperity of the beloved is, as it were, the food of love, and therefore the greater that prosperity, the more richly is love feasted. The love of benevolence is delighted in beholding the prosperity of another, as the love of complacence is, in beholding the beauty or perfection of another. So that the superior prosperity of those that are higher in glory, is so far from being a hindrance to the degree of

love felt toward them, that it is an addition to it, or a part of it.

There is undoubtedly an inconceivably pure, sweet, and fervent love between the saints in glory; and that love is in proportion to the perfection and amiableness of the objects beloved, and therefore it must necessarily cause delight in them when they see that the happiness and glory of others are in proportion to their amiableness, and so in proportion to their love to them. Those that are highest in glory, are those that are highest in holiness, and therefore are those that are most beloved by all the saints; for they most love those that are most holy, and so they will all rejoice in their being the most happy. And it will not be a grief to any of the saints to see those that are higher than themselves in holiness and likeness to God, more loved also than themselves, for all shall have as much love as they desire, and as great manifestations of love as they can bear; and so all shall be filly satisfied; and where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no reason for envy. And there will be no temptation for any to envy those that are above them in glory, on account of the latter being lifted up with pride; for there will be no pride in heaven. We are not to conceive that those who are more holy and happy than others in heaven, will be elated and lifted up in their spirit above others; for those who are above others in holiness, will be superior to them in humility. The saints that are highest in glory will be the lowest in humbleness of mind, for their superior humility is part of their superior holiness. Though all are perfectly free from pride, yet, as some will have greater degrees of divine knowledge than others, and larger capacities to see more of the divine perfections, so they will see more of their own comparative littleness and nothingness, and therefore will be lowest and most abased in humility.

And, besides, the inferior in glory will have no temptation to envy those that are higher than themselves, for those that are highest will not only be more loved by the lower for their higher holiness, but they will also have more of the spirit of love to others, and so will love those that are below them more than if their own capacity and elevation were less. They that are highest in degree in glory, will be of the highest capacity; and so having the greatest knowledge, will see most of God's loveliness, and consequently will have love to God and love to the saints most abounding

in their hearts. And on this account those that are lower in glory will not envy those that are above them, because they will be most beloved by those that are highest in glory. And the superior in glory will be so far from slighting those that are inferior, that they will have most abundant love to them — greater degrees of love in proportion to their superior knowledge and happiness. The higher any are in glory, the more they are like Christ in this respect, so that the love of the higher to the lower will be greater than the love of the equals of the latter to them. And what puts it beyond all doubt that seeing the superior happiness of others will not be a damp to the happiness of the inferior, is this, that their superior happiness consists in their greater humility, and in their greater love to them, and to God, and to Christ, than the inferior will have in themselves. Such will be the sweet and perfect harmony among the heavenly saints, and such the perfect love reigning in every heart toward every other, without limit or alloy, or interruption; and no envy, or malice, or revenge, or contempt, or selfishness shall ever enter there, but all such feelings shall be kept as far away as sin is from holiness, and as hell is from heaven! Let us next consider,

V. *The excellent circumstances in which love shall be exercised and blessed, and enjoyed in heaven.* — And,

1. *Love in heaven is always mutual.* — It is always met with answerable returns of lovewith returns that are proportioned to its exercise. Such returns, love always seeks; and just in proportion as any person is beloved, in the same proportion is his love desired and prized. And in heaven this desire of love, or this fondness for being loved, will never fail of being satisfied. No inhabitants of that blessed world will ever be

grieved with the thought that they are slighted by those that they love, or that their love is not fully and fondly returned.

As the saints will love God with an inconceivable ardency of heart, and to the utmost of their capacity, so they will know that he has loved them from all eternity, and still loves them, and will continue to love them forever. And God will then gloriously manifest himself to them, and they shall know that all that happiness and glory which they are possessed of, are the fruits of his love. And with the same ardor and fervency will the saints love the Lord Jesus Christ; and their love will be accepted; and they shall know that he has loved them with a faithful, yea, even with a dying love. They shall then be more sensible than now they are, what great love it manifested in Christ that he should lay down his life for them; and then will Christ open to their view the great fountain of love in his heart for them, beyond all that they ever saw before. Hereby the love of the saints to God and Christ is seen to he reciprocated, and that declaration fulfilled, “I love them that love me;” and though the love of God to them cannot properly be called the return of love, because he loved them first, yet the sight of his love will, on that very account, the more fill them with joy and admiration, and love to him.

The love of the saints, one to another, will always be mutual and reciprocated, though we cannot suppose that everyone will, in all respects, be equally beloved. Some of the saints are more beloved of God than others, even on earth. The angel told Daniel that he was “a man greatly beloved” (Dan. 9:23); and Luke is called “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14); and John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 20:2). And so, doubtless, those that have been most eminent in fidelity and holiness, and that are highest in glory, are most beloved by Christ in heaven; and doubtless those saints that are most beloved of Christ, and that are nearest to him in glory, are most beloved by all the other saints. Thus we may conclude that such saints as the apostle Paul and the apostle John are more beloved by the saints in heaven than other saints of lower rank. They are more beloved by lower saints than those of equal rank with themselves. But then there are answerable returns of love in these cases; for as such are more beloved by all other saints, so they are fuller of love to other saints The heart of Christ, the great Head of all the saints, is

more full of love than the heart of any saint can be. He loves all the saints far more than any of them love each other. But the more any saint is loved of him, the more is that saint like him, in this respect, that the fuller his heart is of love.

2. *The joy of heavenly love shall never be interrupted or damped by jealousy.* — Heavenly lovers will have no doubt of the love of each other. They shall have no fear that the declarations and professions of love are hypocritical; but shall be perfectly satisfied of the sincerity and strength of each other's affection, as much as if there were a window in every breast, so that everything in the heart could be seen. There shall be no such thing as flattery or dissimulation in heaven, but there perfect sincerity shall reign through all and in all. Every one will be just what he seems to be, and will really have all the love that he seems to have. It will not be as in this world, where comparatively few things are what they seem to be, and where professions are often made lightly and without meaning; but there every expression of love shall come from the bottom of the heart, and all that is professed shall be really and truly felt.

The saints shall know that God loves them, and they shall never doubt the greatness of his love, and they shall have no doubt of the love of all their fellow inhabitants in heaven. And they shall not be jealous of the constancy of each other's love. They shall have no suspicion that the love which others have felt toward them is abated, or in any degree withdrawn from themselves for the sake of some rival, or by reason of anything in themselves which they suspect is disagreeable to others, or through any inconstancy in their own hearts or the hearts of others. Nor will they be in the least afraid that the love of any will ever be abated toward them. There shall be no such thing as inconstancy and unfaithfulness in heaven, to molest and disturb the friendship of that blessed society. The saints shall have no fear that the love of God will ever abate towards them, or that Christ will not continue always to love them with unabated tenderness and affection. And they shall have no jealousy one of another, but shall know that by divine grace the mutual love that exists between them shall never decay nor change.

3. *There shall be nothing within themselves to clog or hinder the saints in heaven in the exercises and expressions of love.* — In this world the

saints find much to hinder them in this respect. They have a great deal of dullness and heaviness. They carry about with them a heavy-molded body — a clod of earth — a mass of flesh and blood that is not fitted to be the organ for a soul inflamed with high exercises of divine love; but which is found a great clog and hindrance to the spirit, so that they cannot express their love to God as they would, and cannot be so active and lively in it as they desire. Often they fain would fly, but they are held down as with a dead weight upon their wings. Fain would they be active, and mount up, as a flame of fire, but they find themselves, as it were, hampered and chained down, so that they cannot do as their love inclines them to do. Love disposes them to burst forth in praise, but their tongues are not obedient; they want words to express the ardency of their souls, and cannot order their speech by reason of darkness (Job 37:19); and often, for want of expressions, they are forced to content themselves with groanings that cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

But in heaven they shall have no such hindrance. There they will have no dullness and unwieldiness, and no corruption of heart to war against divine love, and hinder its expressions; and there no earthly body shall clog with its heaviness the heavenly flame. The saints in heaven shall have no difficulty in expressing all their love. Their souls being on fire with holy love shall not be like a fire pent up, but like a flame uncovered and at liberty. Their spirits, being winged with love, shall have no weight upon them to hinder their flight. There shall be no want of strength or activity, nor any want of words wherewith to praise the object of their affection. Nothing shall hinder them from communing with God, and praising and serving him just as their love inclines them to do. Love naturally desires to express itself; and in heaven the love of the saints shall be at full liberty to express itself as it desires, whether it be towards God or to created beings.

4. *In heaven love will be expressed with perfect decency and wisdom.* — Many in this world that are sincere in their hearts, and have indeed a principle of true love to God and their neighbor, yet have not discretion to guide them in the manner and circumstances of expressing it. Their intentions, and so their speeches, are good, but often not suitably timed, nor discreetly ordered as to circumstances, but are attended with an

indiscreetness that greatly obscures the loveliness of grace in the eyes of others. But in heaven the amiableness and excellence of their love shall not be obscured by any such means. There shall be no indecent or unwise or dissonant speeches or actions — no foolish and sentimental fondness — no needless officiousness — no low or sinful propensities of passion — and no such thing as affections clouding or deluding reason, or going before or against it. But wisdom and discretion shall be as perfect in the saints as love is, and every expression of their love shall be attended with the most amiable and perfect decency and discretion and wisdom.

5. *There shall be nothing external in heaven to keep its inhabitants at a distance from each other, or to hinder their most perfect enjoyment of each other's love.* — There shall be no wall of separation in heaven to keep the saints asunder, nor shall they be hindered from the full and complete enjoyment of each other's love by distance of habitation; for they shall all be together, as one family, in their heavenly Father's house. Nor shall there be any want of full acquaintance to hinder the greatest possible intimacy; and much less shall there be any misunderstanding between them, or misinterpreting things that are said or done by each other. There shall be no disunion through difference of temper, or manners, or circumstances, or from various opinions, or interests, or feelings, or alliances; but all shall be united in the same interests, and all alike allied to the same Savior, and all employed in the same business, serving and glorifying the same God.

6. *In heaven all shall be united together in very near and dear relations* — Love always seeks a near relation to the one who is beloved; and in heaven they shall all be nearly allied and related to each other. All shall be nearly related to God the supreme object of their love, for they shall all be his children. And all shall be nearly related to Christ, for he shall be the head of the whole society, and the husband of the whole Church of saints, all of whom together shall constitute his spouse. And they shall all be related to each other as brethren, for all will be but one society, or rather but one family, and all members of the household of God. And more than this,

7. *In heaven all shall have property and ownership in each other.* — Love seeks to have the beloved its own; and divine love rejoices in saying,

"My beloved is mine, and I am his." And in heaven all shall not only be related one to another, but they shall be each other's, and belong to each other. The saints shall be God's. He brings them home to himself in glory, as that part of the creation that he has chosen for his peculiar treasure. And on the other hand, God shall be theirs, made over to them in an everlasting covenant in this world, and now they shall be forever in full possession of him as their portion. And so the saints shall be Christ's, for he has bought them with a price; and he shall be theirs, for he that gave himself for them will have given himself to them; and in the bonds of mutual and everlasting love, Christ and the saints will have given themselves to each other. And as God and Christ shall be the saints', so the angels shall be their angels, as is intimated in Mat. 18:10; and the saints shall be one another's, for the apostle speaks (2 Cor. 8:5) of the saints in his days, as first giving themselves to the Lord, and then to one another by the will of God; and if this is done on earth, it will be more perfectly done in heaven.

8. *In heaven they shall enjoy each other's love in perfect and uninterrupted prosperity.* — What often on earth alloys the pleasure and sweetness of worldly pleasure, is, that though persons live in love, yet they live in poverty, or meet with great difficulties and sore afflictions, whereby they are grieved for themselves and for one another. For, though in such cases love and friendship in some respects lighten the burden to be borne, yet in other respects they rather add to its weight, because those that love each other become, by their very love, sharers in each other's afflictions, so that each has not only his own trials to bear, but those also of his afflicted friends. But there shall be no adversity in heaven, to give occasion for a pitiful grief of spirit, or to molest or disturb those who are heavenly friends in the enjoyment of each other's friendship. But they shall enjoy one another's love in the greatest prosperity, and in glorious riches and comfort, and in the highest honor and dignity, reigning together in the heavenly kingdom — inheriting all things, sitting on thrones, all wearing crowns of life, and being made kings and priests unto God forever.

Christ and his disciples, while on earth, were often together in affliction and trial, and they kept up and manifested the strongest love and

friendship to each other under great and sore sufferings. And now in heaven they enjoy each other's love in immortal glory, all sorrow and sighing having forever fled away. Both Christ and his saints were acquainted with much sorrow and grief in this world, though Christ had the greatest share, being peculiarly a "man of sorrows." But in heaven they shall sit together in heavenly places, where sorrow and grief shall never more be known. And so all the saints will enjoy each other's love in heaven, in a glory and prosperity in comparison with which the wealth and thrones of the greatest earthly princes are but as sordid poverty and destitution. So that as they love one another, they have not only their own but each other's prosperity to rejoice in, and are by love made partakers of each other's blessedness and glory. Such is the love of every saint to every other saint, that it makes the glory which he sees other saints enjoy, as it were, his own. He so rejoices that they enjoy such glory, that it is in some respects to him as if he himself enjoyed it in his own personal experience.

9. *In heaven all things shall conspire to promote their love, and give advantage for mutual enjoyment.* — Thereshall be none there to tempt any to dislike or hatred; no busybodies, or malicious adversaries, to make misrepresentations, or create misunderstandings, or spread abroad any evil reports, but every being and everything shall conspire to promote love, and the full enjoyment of love. Heaven itself, the place of habitation, is a garden of pleasures, a heavenly paradise, fitted in all respects for an abode of heavenly love; a place where they may have sweet society and perfect enjoyment of each other's love. None are unsocial or distant from each other. The petty distinctions of this world do not draw lines in the society of heaven, but all meet in the equality of holiness and of holy love.

All things in heaven do also remarkably show forth the beauty and loveliness of God and Christ, and have the brightness and sweetness of divine love upon them. The very light that shines in and fills that world, is the light of love, for it is the shining of the glory of the Lamb of God, that most wonderful influence of lamb-like meekness and love that fills the heavenly Jerusalem with light. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). The glory that is about him that

reigns in heaven is so radiant and sweet, that it is compared (Rev. 4:3) to "a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald;" and it is the rainbow that is so often used in the Old Testament as the fit token of God's love and grace manifested in his covenant. The light of the New Jerusalem, which is the light of God's glory, is said to be like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (Rev. 21:11), thus signifying the greatest preciousness and beauty; and as to its continuance, it is said there is no night there, but only an endless and glorious day. This suggests, once more, that,

10. *The inhabitants of heaven shall know that they shall forever be continued in the perfect enjoyment of each other's love.* — They shall know that God and Christ shall be forever with them as their God and portion, and that his love shall be continued and fully manifested forever, and that all their beloved fellow-saints shall forever live with them in glory, and shall forever keep up the same love in their hearts which they now have. And they shall know that they themselves shall ever live to love God, and love the saints, and to enjoy their love in all its fulness and sweetness forever. They shall be in no fear of any end to this happiness, or of any abatement from its fulness and blessedness, or that they shall ever be weary of its exercises and expressions, or cloyed with its enjoyments, or that the beloved objects shall ever grow old or disagreeable, so that their love shall at last die away. All in heaven shall flourish in immortal youth and freshness. Age will not there diminish anyone's beauty or vigor; and their love shall abide in everyone's heart, as a living spring perpetually springing up in the soul, or as a flame that never dies away. And the holy pleasure of this love shall be as a river that is forever flowing clear and full, and increasing continually. The heavenly paradise of love shall always be kept as in a perpetual spring, without autumn or winter, where no frosts shall blight, or leaves decay and fall, but where every plant shall be in perpetual freshness, and bloom, and fragrance, and beauty, always springing forth, and always blossoming, and always bearing fruit. The leaf of the righteous shall not wither (Psa. 1:3). And in the midst of the streets of heaven, and on either side of the river, grows the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month (Rev. 22:2). Everything in the heavenly world shall contribute to the joy of the saints, and every joy of heaven shall be

eternal. No night shall settle down with its darkness upon the brightness of their everlasting day.

Having thus noticed many of the blessed circumstances with which love in heaven is exercised, and expressed, and enjoyed, I proceed, as proposed, to speak, lastly,

VI. *Of the blessed effects and fruits of this love, as exercised and enjoyed in these circumstances.* — And of the many blessed fruits of it, I would at this time mention but two.

1. *The most excellent and perfect behavior of all the inhabitants of heaven toward God and each other.* — Charity, or divine love, is the sum of all good principles, and therefore the fountain whence proceed all amiable and excellent actions. And as in heaven this love will be perfect, to the perfect exclusion of all sin consisting in enmity against God and fellow creatures, so the fruit of it will be a most perfect behavior toward all. Hence life in heaven will be without the least sinful failure or error. None shall ever come short, or turn aside from the way of holiness in the least degree, but every feeling and action shall be perfect in itself and in all its circumstances. Every part of their behavior shall be holy and divine in matter, and form, and spirit, and end.

We know not particularly how the saints in heaven shall be employed; but in general we know that they are employed in praising and serving God; and this they will do perfectly, being influenced by such a love as we have been considering. And we have reason to think that they are so employed as in some way to be subservient, under God, to each other's happiness, for they are represented in the Scriptures as united together in one society, which, it would seem, can be for no other purpose but mutual subserviency and happiness. And they are thus mutually subservient by a perfectly amiable behavior one towards another, as a fruit of their perfect love one to another. And even if they are not confined to this society, but if any or all of them are at times sent errands of duty or mercy to distant worlds, or employed, as some suppose them to be, as ministering spirits to friends in this world, they are still led by the influence of love, to conduct, in all their behavior, in such a manner as is well pleasing to God, and thus conducive to their own and others' happiness. The other fruit of

love, as exercised in such circumstances, is,

2. *Perfect tranquillity and joy in heaven.* — Charity, or holy and humble Christian love, is a principle of wonderful power to give ineffable quietness and tranquillity to the soul. It banishes all disturbance, and sweetly composes and brings rest to the spirit, and makes all divinely calm and sweet and happy. In that soul where divine love reigns and is in lively exercise, nothing can cause a storm, or even gather threatening clouds.

There are many principles contrary to love, that make this world like a tempestuous sea. Selfishness, and envy, and revenge, and jealousy, and kindred passions keep life on earth in a constant tumult, and make it a scene of confusion and uproar, where no quiet rest is to be enjoyed except in renouncing this world and looking to another. But oh! what rest is there in that world which the God of peace and love fills with his own gracious presence, and in which the Lamb of God lives and reigns, filling it with the brightest and sweetest beams of his love; where there is nothing to disturb or offend, and no being or object to be seen that is not surrounded with perfect amiableness and sweetness; where the saints shall find and enjoy all that they love, and so be perfectly satisfied; where there is no enemy and no enmity; but perfect love in every heart and to every being; where there is perfect harmony among all the inhabitants, no one envying another, but everyone rejoicing in the happiness of every other; where all their love is humble and holy, and perfectly Christian, without the least carnality or impurity; where love is always mutual and reciprocated to the full; where there is no hypocrisy or dissembling, but perfect simplicity and sincerity; where there is no treachery, or unfaithfulness, or inconstancy, or jealousy in any form; where there is no clog or hindrance to the exercises or expressions of love, no imprudence or indecency in expressing it, and no influence of folly or indiscretion in any word or deed; where there is no separation wall, and no misunderstanding or strangeness, but full acquaintance and perfect intimacy in all; where there is no division through different opinions or interests, but where all in that glorious and loving society shall be most nearly and divinely related, and each shall belong to every other, and all shall enjoy each other in perfect prosperity and riches, and honor,

without any sickness, or grief, or persecution, or sorrow, or any enemy to molest them, or any busybody to create jealousy or misunderstanding, or mar the perfect, and holy, and blessed peace that reigns in heaven! And all this in the garden of God — in the paradise of love, where everything is filled with love, and everything conspires to promote and kindle it, and keep up its flame, and nothing ever interrupts it, but everything has been fitted by an all-wise God for its full enjoyment under the greatest advantages forever! And all, too, where the beauty of the beloved objects shall never fade, and love shall never grow weary nor decay, but the soul shall more and more rejoice in love forever!

Oh! what tranquillity will there be in such a world as this! And who can express the fullness and blessedness of this peace! What a calm is this! How sweet, and holy, and joyous! What a haven of rest to enter, after having passed through the storms and tempests of this world, in which pride, and selfishness, and envy, and malice, and scorn, and contempt, and contention, and vice, are as waves of a restless ocean, always rolling, and often dashed about in violence and fury! What a Canaan of rest to come to, after going through this waste and howling wilderness, full of snares, and pitfalls, and poisonous serpents, where no rest could be found!

And oh! what joy will there be, springing up in the hearts of the saints, after they have passed through their wearisome pilgrimage, to be brought to such a paradise as this! Here is joy unspeakable indeed, and full of glory — joy that is humble, holy, enrapturing, and divine in its perfection! Love is always a sweet principle; and especially divine love. This, even on earth, is a spring of sweetness; but in heaven it shall become a stream, a river, an ocean! All shall stand about the God of glory, who is the great fountain of love, opening, as it were, their very souls to be filled with those effusions of love that are poured forth from his fullness, just as the flowers on the earth, in the bright and joyous days of spring, open their bosoms to the sun, to be filled with his light and warmth, and to flourish in beauty and fragrancy under his cheering rays.

Every saint in heaven is as a flower in that garden of God, and holy love is the fragrance and sweet odor that they all send forth, and with which they fill the bowers of that paradise above. Every soul there, is as a note in

some concert of delightful music, that sweetly harmonizes with every other note, and all together blend in the most rapturous strains in praising God and the Lamb forever. And so all help each other, to their utmost, to express the love of the whole society to its glorious Father and Head, and to pour back love into the great fountain of love whence they are supplied and filled with love, and blessedness, and glory. And thus they will love, and reign in love, and in that godlike joy that is its blessed fruit, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath ever entered into the heart of man in this world to conceive; and thus in the full sunlight of the throne, enraptured with joys that are forever increasing, and yet forever full, they shall live and reign with God and Christ forever and ever!

In the application of this subject, I remark,

1. *If heaven be such a world as has been described, then we may see a reason why contention and strife tend to darken our evidence of fitness for its possession.* — Experience teaches that this is the effect of contention. When principles of malignity and ill-will prevail among God's people, as they sometimes do through the remaining corruption of their hearts, and they get into a contentious spirit, or are engaged in any strife whether public or private, and their spirits are filled with opposition to their neighbors in any matter whatever, their former evidences for heaven seem to become dim, or die away, and they are in darkness about their spiritual state, and do not find that comfortable and satisfying hope that they used to enjoy.

And so, when converted persons get into ill frames in their families, the consequence commonly, if not universally, is, that they live without much of a comfortable sense of heavenly things, or any lively hope of heaven. They do not enjoy much of that spiritual calm and sweetness that those do who live in love and peace. They have not that help from God, and that communion with him, and that near intercourse with heaven in prayer, that others have. The apostle seems to speak of contention in families as having this influence. His language is (1 Pet. 3:7), "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them" (your wives) "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel; and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Here he intimates

that discord in families tends to hinder Christians in their prayers. And what Christian that has made the sad experiment, has not done it to his sorrow, and in his own experience does not bear witness to the truth of the apostle's intimation?

Why it is so, that contention has this effect of hindering spiritual exercises and comforts and hopes, and of destroying the sweet hope of that which is heavenly, we may learn from the doctrine we have considered. For heaven being a world of love, it follows that, when we have the least exercise of love, and the most of a contrary spirit, then we have the least of heaven, and are farthest from it in the frame of our mind. Then we have the least of the exercise of that wherein consists a conformity to heaven, and a preparation for it, and what tends to it; and so, necessarily, we must have least evidence of our title to heaven, and be farthest from the comfort which such evidence affords. We may see, again, from this subject,

2. *How happy those are who are entitled to heaven.* — There are some persons living on earth, to whom the happiness of the heavenly world belongs as much, yea, much more than any man's earthly estate belongs to himself. They have a part and interest in this world of love, and have a proper right and title to it, for they are of the number of those of whom it is written (Rev. 22:14), "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And, doubtless, there are such persons here amongst us. And oh! how happy are all such, entitled as they are to an interest in such a world as heaven! Surely they are the blessed of the earth, and the fullness of their blessedness no language can describe, no words express. But here some may be ready to say, "Without doubt they are happy persons that have a title to such a blessed world, and are soon to enter on the eternal possession of its joys. But who are these persons? How shall they be known, and by what marks may they be distinguished?" In answer to such an inquiry, I would mention three things that belong to their character: —

First, they are those that have had the principle or seed of the same love that reigns in heaven implanted in their hearts, in this world, in the work of regeneration. They are not those who have no other principles in

their hearts than natural principles, or such as they have by their first birth, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." But they are those who have been the subjects of the new birth, or who have been born of the Spirit. A glorious work of the Spirit of God has been wrought in their hearts, renewing them by bringing down from heaven, as it were, some of the light and some of the holy, pure flame that is in that world of love, and giving it place in them. Their hearts are a soil in which this heavenly seed has been sown, and in which it abides and grows. And so they are changed, and, from being earthly, have become heavenly in their dispositions. The love of the world is mortified, and the love of God implanted. Their hearts are drawn to God and Christ, and for their sakes flow out to the saints in humble and spiritual love. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:23); "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

Second, they are those who have freely chosen the happiness that flows from the exercise and enjoyment of such love as is in heaven, above all other conceivable happiness. They see and understand so much of this as to know that it is the best good. They do not merely yield that it is so from rational arguments that may be offered for it, and by which they are convinced that it is so, but they know it is so from what little they have tasted of it. It is the happiness of love, and the beginning of a life of such love, holy, humble, divine, and heavenly love. Love to God, and love to Christ, and love to saints for God and Christ's sake, and the enjoyment of the fruits of God's love in holy communion with God, and Christ, and with holy persons — this is what they have a relish for; and such is their renewed nature, that such happiness suits their disposition and appetite and wishes above all other things; and not only above all things that they have, but above all that they can conceive it possible that they could have. The world does not afford anything like it. They have chosen this before all things else, and chosen it freely. Their souls go out after it more than after everything else, and their hearts are more eager in pursuit of it. They have chosen it not merely because they have met with sorrow, and are in such low and afflicted circumstances that they do not expect much from the world, but because their hearts were so captivated by this good that they chose it for its own sake before all worldly good, even if they could

have ever so much of the latter, and enjoy it ever so long.

Third, they are those who, from the love that is in them, are, in heart and life, in principle and practice, struggling after holiness. Holy love makes them long for holiness. It is a principle that thirsts after growth. It is in imperfection, and in a state of infancy, in this world, and it desires growth. It has much to struggle with. In the heart in this world there are many opposite principles and influences; and it struggles after greater oneness, and more liberty, and more free exercise, and better fruit. The great strife and struggle of the new man is after holiness. His heart struggles after it, for he has an interest in heaven, and therefore he struggles with that sin that would keep him from it. He is full of ardent desires, and breathings, and longings, and strivings to be holy. And his hands struggle as well as his heart. He strives in his practice. His life is a life of sincere and earnest endeavor to be universally and increasingly holy. He feels that he is not holy enough, but far from it; and he desires to be nearer perfection, and more like those who are in heaven. And this is one reason why he longs to be in heaven, that he may be perfectly holy. And the great principle which leads him thus to struggle, is love. It is not only fear; but it is love to God, and love to Christ, and love to holiness. Love is a holy fire within him, and, like any other flame which is in a degree pent up, it will and does struggle for liberty; and this its struggling is the struggle for holiness.

3. *What has been said on this subject may well awaken and alarm the impenitent.* — And,

First, by putting them in mind of their misery, in that they have no portion or right in this world of love. You have heard what has been said of heaven, what kind of glory and blessedness is there, and how happy the saints and angels are in that world of perfect love. But consider that none of this belongs to you. When you hear of such things, you hear of that in which you have no interest. No such person as you, a wicked hater of God and Christ, and one that is under the power of a spirit of enmity against all that is good, shall ever enter there. Such as you are, never belong to the faithful Israel of God, and shall never enter their heavenly rest. It may be said to you, as Peter said to Simon (Acts 8:21), “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God;” and as

Nehemiah said to Sanballat and his associates (Neh. 2:20), "You have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." If such a soul as yours should be admitted into heaven, that world of love, how nauseous would it be to those blest spirits whose souls are as a flame of love! and how would it discompose that loving and blessed society, and put everything in confusion! It would make heaven no longer heaven, if such souls should be admitted there. It would change it from a world of love to a world of hatred, and pride, and envy, and malice, and revenge, as this world is! But this shall never be; and the only alternative is, that such as you shall be shut out with "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," (Rev. 22:15); that is, with all that is vile, and unclean, and unholy. And this subject may well awaken and alarm the impenitent,

Secondly, by showing them that they are in danger of hell, which is a world of hatred. There are three worlds. One is this, which is an intermediate world — a world in which good and evil are so mixed together as to be a sure sign that this world is not to continue forever. Another is heaven, a world of love, without any hatred. And the other is hell, a world of hatred, where there is no love, which is the world to which all of you who are in a Christless state properly belong. This last is the world where God manifests his displeasure and wrath, as in heaven he manifests his love. Everything in hell is hateful. There is not one solitary object there that is not odious and detestable, horrid and hateful. There is no person or thing to be seen there, that is amiable or lovely; nothing that is pure, or holy, or pleasant, but everything abominable and odious. There are no beings there but devils, and damned spirits that are like devils. Hell is, as it were, a vast den of poisonous hissing serpents; the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and with him all his hateful brood.

In that dark world there are none but those whom God hates with a perfect and everlasting hatred. He exercises no love, and extends no mercy to any one object there, but pours out upon them horrors without mixture. All things in the wide universe that are hateful shall be gathered together in hell, as in a vast receptacle provided on purpose, that the universe which God has made may be cleansed of its filthiness, by casting it all into this great sink of wickedness and woe. It is a world prepared on

purpose for the expression of God's wrath. He has made hell for this; and he has no other use for it but there to testify forever his hatred of sin and sinners, where there is no token of love or mercy. There is nothing there but what shows forth the Divine indignation and wrath. Every object shows forth wrath. It is a world all overflowed with a deluge of wrath, as it were, with a deluge of liquid fire, so as to be called a lake of fire and brimstone, and the second death.

There are none in hell but what have been haters of God, and so have procured his wrath and hatred on themselves; and there they shall continue to hate him forever. No love to God will ever be felt in hell; but everyone there perfectly hates him, and so will continue to hate him, and without any restraint will express their hatred to him, blaspheming and raging against him, while they gnaw their tongues for pain. And though they all join together in their enmity and opposition to God, yet there is no union or friendliness among themselves — they agree in nothing but hatred, and the expression of hatred. They hate God, and Christ, and angels, and saints in heaven; and not only so, but they hate one another, like a company of serpents or vipers, not only spitting out venom against God, but at one another, biting and stinging and tormenting each other.

The devils in hell will hate damned souls. They hated them while in this world, and therefore it was that with such subtlety and indefatigable temptations they sought their ruin. They thirsted for the blood of their souls, because they hated them; they longed to get them in their power to torment them; they watched them as a roaring lion does his prey; because they hated them, therefore they flew upon their souls like hell-hounds, as soon as ever they were parted from their bodies, full of eagerness to torment them. And now they have them in their power, they will spend eternity in tormenting them with the utmost strength and cruelty that devils are capable of. They are, as it were, continually and eternally tearing these poor damned souls that are in their hands. And these latter will not only be hated and tormented by devils, but they will have no love or pity one towards another, but will be like devils one to another, and will, to their utmost, torment each other, being like brands in the fire, each of which helps to burn the others.

In hell all those principles will reign and rage that are contrary to love,

without any restraining grace to keep them within bounds. Here will be unrestrained pride, and malice, and envy, and revenge, and contention in all its fury and without end, never knowing peace. The miserable inhabitants will bite and devour one another, as well as be enemies to God, and Christ, and holy beings. Those who, in their wickedness on earth, were companions together, and had a sort of carnal friendship one for another, will here have no appearance of fellowship; but perfect and continual and undisguised hatred will exist between them. As on earth they promoted each other's sins, so now in hell they will promote each other's punishment. On earth they were the instruments of undoing each other's souls — there they were occupied in blowing up the fires of each other's lusts, and now they will blow forever the fires of each other's torments. They ruined one another in sinning, setting bad examples to each other, poisoning each other by wicked talk, and now they will be as much engaged in tormenting, as once they were in tempting and corrupting each other.

And there their hatred and envy, and all evil passions, will be a torment to themselves. God and Christ, whom they will hate most, and toward whom their souls will be as full of hatred as an oven is ever full of fire, will be infinitely above their reach, dwelling in infinite blessedness and glory which they cannot diminish. And they will but torment themselves by their fruitless envy of the saints and angels in heaven, whom they cannot come nigh to or injure. And they shall have no pity from them or from anyone, for hell is looked on only with hatred, and with no pity or compassion. And thus they will be left to spend their eternity together.

Now consider, all ye that are out of Christ, and that were never born again, and that never had any blessed renovation of your hearts by the Holy Spirit implanting divine love in them, and leading you to choose the happiness that consists in holy love as your best and sweetest good, and to spend your life in struggling after holiness, — consider your danger, and what is before you. For this is the world to which ye are condemned; and so the world to which you belong through the sentence of the law; and the world that every day and hour you are in danger of having your abode everlastingly fixed in; and the world to which, if you repent not, you will soon go, instead of going to that blessed world of love of which

you have now heard. Consider, oh! consider, that it is indeed thus with you.. These things are not cunningly-devised fables, but the great and dreadful realities of God's Word, and things that, in a little while, you will know with everlasting certainty are true. How, then, can you rest in such a state as you are in, and go about so carelessly from day to day, and so heedless and negligent of your precious, immortal souls? Consider seriously these things, and be wise for yourself, before it is too late; before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and you fall into the world of wrath and hatred, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, with spiteful malice and rage against God, and Christ, and one another, and with horror and anguish of spirit forever. Flee to the stronghold while ye are prisoners of hope, before the door of hope is closed, and the agonies of the second death shall begin their work, and your eternal doom is sealed!

4. *Let the consideration of what has been said of heaven stir up all earnestly to seek after it.* — If heaven be such a blessed world, then let it be our chosen country, and the inheritance that we look for and seek. Let us turn our course this way, and press on to its possession. It is not impossible but that this glorious world may be obtained by us. It is offered to us. Though it be so excellent and blessed a country, yet God stands ready to give us an inheritance there, if it be but the country that we desire, and will choose, and diligently seek. God gives us our choice. We may have our inheritance wherever we choose it, and may obtain heaven if we will but seek it by patient continuance in well-doing. We are all of us, as it were, set here in this world as in a vast wilderness, with diverse countries about it, and with several ways or paths leading to these different countries, and we are left to our choice what course we will take. If we heartily choose heaven, and set our hearts entirely on that blessed Canaan — that land of love, and if we choose and love the path that leads to it, we may walk in that path; and if we continue to walk in it, it will lead us to heaven at last.

Let what we have heard of the land of love stir us all up to turn our faces toward it, and bend our course thitherward. Is not what we have heard of the happy state of that country, and the many delights that are in it, enough to make us thirst after it, and to cause us, with the greatest

earnestness and steadfastness of resolution, to press towards it, and spend our whole lives in traveling in the way that leads thither? What joyful news might it well be to us when we hear of such a world of perfect peace and holy love, and to hear that it is possible, yea, that there is full opportunity, for us to come to it, and spend an eternity in its joys! Is not what we have heard of that blessed world enough to make us weary of this world of pride, and malice, and contention, and perpetual jarring and jangling, a world of confusion, a wilderness of hissing serpents, a tempestuous ocean, where there is no quite rest, where all are for themselves, and selfishness reigns and governs, and all are striving to exalt themselves, regardless of what becomes of others, and all are eager after worldly good, which is the great object of desire and contention, and where men are continually annoying, and calumniating, and reproaching, and otherwise injuring and abusing one another — a world full of injustice, and oppression, and cruelty — a world where there is so much treachery, and falsehood, and fickleness, and hypocrisy, and suffering, and death — where there is so little confidence in mankind, and every good man has so many failings, and has so much to render him unlovely and uncomfortable, and where there is so much of sorrow, and guilt, and sin in every form.

Truly this is an evil world, and so it is like to be. It is in vain for us to expect that it will be any other than a world of sin, a world of pride and enmity and strife, and so a restless world. And though the times may hereafter be mended, yet these things will always be more or less found in the world so long as it stands. Who, then, would content himself with a portion in such a world? What man, acting wisely and considerately, would concern himself much about laying up in store in such a world as this, and would not rather neglect the world, and let it go to them that would take it, and apply all his heart and strength to lay up treasure in heaven, and to press on to that world of love? What will it signify for us to hoard up great possessions in this world; and how can the thought of having our portion here be pleasing to us, when there is an interest offered us in such a glorious world as heaven is, and especially when, if we have our portion here, we must, when the world has passed away, have our eternal portion in hell, that world of hatred, and of endless wrath of God, where only devils and damned spirits dwell?

We all naturally desire rest and quietness, and if we would obtain it, let us seek that world of peace and love of which we have now heard, where a sweet and blessed rest remaineth for God's people. If we get an interest in that world, then, when we have done with this, we shall leave all our cares, and troubles, and fatigues, and perplexities, and disturbances forever. We shall rest from these storms that are raging here, and from every toil and labor, in the paradise of God. You that are poor, and think yourself despised by your neighbors and little cared for among men, do not much concern yourselves for this. Do not care much for the friendship of the world; but seek heaven, where there is no such thing as contempt, and where none are despised, but all are highly esteemed and honored, and dearly beloved by all. You that think you have met with many abuses, and much ill-treatment from others, care not for it. Do not hate them for it, but set your heart on heaven, that world of love, and press toward that better country, where all is kindness and holy affection. And here for direction how to seek heaven,

First, let not your heart go after the things of this world, as your chief good. Indulge not yourself in the possession of earthly things as though they were to satisfy your soul. This is the reverse of seeking heaven; it is to go in a way contrary to that which leads to the world of love. If you would seek heaven, your affections must be taken off from the pleasures of the world. You must not allow yourself in sensuality, or worldliness, or the pursuit of the enjoyments or honors of the world, or occupy your thoughts or time in heaping up the dust of the earth. You must mortify the desires of vain-glory, and become poor in spirit and lowly in heart.

Second, you must, in your meditations and holy exercises, bemuch engaged in conversing with heavenly persons, and objects, and enjoyments. You cannot constantly be seeking heaven, without having your thoughts much there. Turn, then, the stream of your thoughts and affections towards that world of love, and towards the God of love that dwells there, and toward the saints and angels that are at Christ's right hand. Let your thoughts, also, be much on the objects and enjoyments of the world of love. Commune much with God and Christ in prayer, and think often of all that is in heaven, of the friends who are there, and the praises and worship there, and of all that will make up the blessedness of

that world of love. “Let your conversation be in heaven.”

Third, be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven. Though the path is before you, and you may walk in it if you desire, yet it is a way that is ascending, and filled with many difficulties and obstacles. That glorious city of light and love is, as it were, on the top of a high hill or mountain, and there is no way to it but by upward and arduous steps. But though the ascent be difficult, and the way full of trials, still it is worth your while to meet them all for the sake of coming and dwelling in such a glorious city at last. Be willing, then, to undergo the labor, and meet the toil, and overcome the difficulty. What is it all in comparison with the sweet rest that is at your journey’s end? Be willing to cross the natural inclination of flesh and blood, which is downward, and press onward and upward to the prize. At every step it will be easier and easier to ascend; and the higher your ascent, the more will you be cheered by the glorious prospect before you, and by a nearer view of that heavenly city where in a little while you shall forever be at rest.

Fourth, in all your way let your eye be fixed on Jesus, who has gone to heaven as your forerunner. Look to him. Behold his glory in heaven, that a sight of it may stir you up the more earnestly to desire to be there. Look to him in his example. Consider how, by patient continuance in well-doing, and by patient endurance of great suffering, he went before you to heaven. Look to him as your mediator, and trust in the atonement which he has made, entering into the holiest of all in the upper temple. Look to him as your intercessor, who forever pleads for you before the throne of God. Look to him as your strength, that by his Spirit he may enable you to press on, and overcome every difficulty of the way. Trust in his promises of heaven to those that love and follow him, which he has confirmed by entering into heaven as the head, and representative, and Savior of his people. And,

Fifth, if you would be in the way to the world of love, see that you live a life of love — of love to God, and love to men All of us hope to have part in the world of love hereafter, and therefore we should cherish the spirit of love, and live a life of holy love here on earth. This is the way to be like the inhabitants of heaven, who are now confirmed in love forever. Only in this way can you be like them in excellence and loveliness, and like them,

too, in happiness, and rest, and joy. By living in love in this world you may be like them, too, in sweet and holy peace, and thus have, on earth, the foretastes of heavenly pleasures and delights. Thus, also, you may have a sense of the glory of heavenly things, as of God, and Christ, and holiness; and your heart be disposed and opened by holy love to God, and by the spirit of peace and love to men, to a sense of the excellence and sweetness of all that is to be found in heaven. Thus shall the windows of heaven be as it were opened, so that its glorious light shall shine in upon your soul. Thus you may have the evidence of your fitness for that blessed world, and that you are actually on the way to its possession. And being thus made meet, through grace, for the inheritance of the saints in light, when a few more days shall have passed away, you shall be with them in their blessedness forever. Happy, thrice happy those, who shall thus be found faithful to the end, and then shall be welcomed to the joy of their Lord! There “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

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Few There Be That Find It

"Few there be that find it." -- **Matthew 7:14**

Doctrine. ’Tis a hard thing to find the right way to Heaven.

I. There is a way to Heaven.

God has opened a door.

II. There is but one right way.

III. 'Tis a hard thing to find this one right way.

Appears: In that there are so few that find the way.

Though all have so much need to find.

Though so many desire to find and seek after it.

Though so many think they have found.

.....so many are mistaken.

That many of those that do find it, first take a great deal of pains.

Some for a long time.

Many prayers.

Many difficulties.

Reason: Negatively, not that God hasn't has not called us.

" " very plain in itself.

Reasons:

Many wrong ways.

Like traveling through a great wilderness.

Full of difficulties...dangers....

But one right way.

A narrow way.

Many wrong ways.

Mention some of the wrong ways.

Do right in some things only.

Outward Religion only.

Affections that go away.

Religious out of regard to men.

Religious only out of fear of hell.

……..from self-love.

Don’t love God for Himself.

Trust in their own righteousness.

Depend on the good opinion of others.

Apt to think themselves convicted when they are not.

High pride: apt to think well of themselves.

A little good looks great.

Don’t see what is bad.

How many things men often think are **Conversion.**

2. Men’s own lust blinds ’em.

The way is good and plain.

Right way is what men don’t like.

Up-hill.

Contrary to all their lusts.

..... to their pride.

..... to their worldliness.

..... sensuality.

..... slothfulness.

Enmity against God.

Wrong ways are

Easy.

Broad.

Down-hill.

3. Devils.

Blind them and deceive them.

4. Things of this world blind 'em.

5. Wicked men implead (?) 'em.

Application.

What a great mercy to have the Word of God.

Mercy that God has appointed ministers.

Great need of Prayer —

Never without God’s help.

Don’t trust… v. 22…

What need of God’s power and striving.

Directions.

Pray earnestly.

Not trust…..[As above, v. 22.]

Take advice.

Begin soon.

Hold on and hold out.

Don’t take hope *too soon*.

In every thing follow the Word of God.

You need to be much concerned.

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The Eternity of Hell's Torments

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." -- **Matthew 25:46**

Subject: The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.

In this chapter we have the most particular description of the day of judgment, of any in the whole Bible. Christ here declares that when he shall hereafter sit on the throne of his glory, the righteous and the wicked shall be set before him, and separated one from the other, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. Then we have an account how both will be judged according to their works: how the good works of the one and the evil works of the other will be rehearsed, and how the sentence shall be pronounced accordingly. We are told what the sentence will be on each, and then we have an account of the execution of the sentence on both. In the words of the text is the account of the execution of the sentence on the wicked or the ungodly, concerning which, it is to my purpose to observe two things.

I. The duration of the punishment on which they are here said to enter: it is called everlasting punishment.

II. The time of their entrance on this everlasting punishment, *viz.* after the day of judgment, when all these things that are of a temporary continuance shall have come to an end and even those of them that are most lasting — the frame of the world itself, the earth which is said to abide forever, the ancient mountains and everlasting hills, [and] the sun, moon, and stars. When the heavens shall have waxed old like a garment and as a vesture shall be changed, then shall be the time when the wicked shall enter on their punishment.

Doctrine. — The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolute ly eternal.

There are two opinions which I mean to oppose in this doctrine. One is that the eternal death with which wicked men are threatened in Scripture, signifies no more than eternal annihilation: that God will punish their wickedness by eternally abolishing their being.

The other opinion which I mean to oppose is that though the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet it shall not be absolutely eternal, but only of a very long continuance.

Therefore, to establish the doctrine in opposition to these different opinions, I shall undertake to show,

I. That it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

II. That the eternal death which God threatens is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery.

III. That this misery will not only continue for a very long time, but will be absolutely without end.

IV. That various good ends will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

I. I am to show that it is not contrary to the divine perfections to inflict on wicked men a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

This is the sum of the objections usually made against this doctrine: that it is inconsistent with the justice, and especially with the mercy, of God. And some say [that] if it be strictly just, yet how can we suppose that a merciful God can bear eternally to torment his creatures.

First, I shall briefly show that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, *viz.* that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment, and such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the evil or demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and is no more than sin deserves. And if the obligation to love, honor, and obey God be infinite, then sin which is the violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Again, if God be infinitely worthy of love, honor, and obedience, then our obligation to love, and honor, and obey him is infinitely great. — So that God being infinitely glorious, or infinitely worthy of our love, honor, and obedience, our obligation to love, honor, and obey him (and so to avoid all sin) is infinitely great. Again, our obligation to love, honor, and obey God being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil. Once more, sin being an infinite evil, deserves an

infinite punishment. An infinite punishment is no more than it deserves. Therefore such punishment is just, which was the thing to be proved. There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the sovereign of the universe, is infinitely glorious, which I presume none of my hearers will venture to do.

Second, I am to show that it is not inconsistent with the mercy of God, to inflict an eternal punishment on wicked men. It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful in such a sense that he cannot bear that penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion to which his nature is so subject that God is liable to be moved, and affected, and overcome by seeing a creature in misery, so that he cannot bear to see justice executed: which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true, argue great weakness. — It would be a great defect, and not a perfection, in the sovereign and supreme Judge of the world, to be merciful in such a sense that he could not bear to have penal justice executed. It is a very unscriptural notion of the mercy of God. The Scriptures everywhere represent the mercy of God as free and sovereign, and not that the exercises of it are necessary, so that God cannot bear justice should take place. The Scriptures abundantly speak of it as the glory of the divine attribute of mercy, that it is free and sovereign in its exercises, and not that God cannot but deliver sinners from misery. This is a mean and most unworthy idea of the divine mercy.

It is most absurd also as it is contrary to plain fact. For if there be any meaning in the objection, this is supposed in it, that all misery of the creature, whether just or unjust, is in itself contrary to the nature of God. For if his mercy be of such a nature that a very great degree of misery, though just, is contrary to his nature, then it is only to add to the mercy. And then a less degree of misery is contrary to his nature (again to add further to it), and a still less degree of misery is contrary to his nature. And so the mercy of God being infinite, all misery must be contrary to his nature, which we see to be contrary to fact. For we see that God in his providence, does indeed inflict very great calamities on mankind even in this life.

However strong such kind of objections against the eternal misery of the

wicked, may seem to the carnal, senseless hearts of men, as though it were against God's justice and mercy, yet their seeming strength arises from a want of sense of the infinite evil, odiousness, and provocation there is in sin. Hence it seems to us not suitable that any poor creature should be the subject of such misery, because we have no sense of anything abominable and provoking in any creature answerable to it. If we had, then this infinite calamity would not seem unsuitable. For one thing would but appear answerable and proportionable to another, and so the mind would rest in it as fit and suitable, and no more than what is proper to be ordered by the just, holy, and good Governor of the world.

That this is so, we may be convinced by this consideration, *viz.* that when we hear or read of some horrid instances of cruelty, it may be to some poor innocent child or some holy martyr — and their cruel persecutors, having no regard to their shrieks and cries, only sported themselves with their misery, and would not vouchsafe even to put an end to their lives — we have a sense of the evil of them, and they make a deep impression on our minds. Hence it seems just, every way fit and suitable, that God should inflict a very terrible punishment on persons who have perpetrated such wickedness. It seems no way disagreeable to any perfection of the Judge of the world. We can think of it without being at all shocked. The reason is that we have a sense of the evil of their conduct, and a sense of the proportion there is between the evil or demerit and the punishment.

Just so, if we saw a proportion between the evil of sin and eternal punishment, *i.e.* if we saw something in wicked men that should appear as hateful to us, as eternal misery appears dreadful (something that should as much stir up indignation and detestation, as eternal misery does terror), all objections against this doctrine would vanish at once. Though now it seem incredible, [and] though when we hear of such a degree and duration of torments as are held forth in this doctrine and think what eternity is, it is ready to seem impossible that such torments should be inflicted on poor feeble creatures by a Creator of infinite mercy. Yet this arises principally from these two causes: 1. It is so contrary to the depraved inclinations of mankind, that they hate to believe it and cannot bear it should be true. 2. They see not the suitableness of eternal

punishment to the evil of sin. They see not that it is no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin.

Having thus shown that the eternal punishment of the wicked is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, I shall now proceed to show that it is so far from being inconsistent with the divine perfections, that those perfections evidently require it; *i.e.* they require that sin should have so great a punishment, either in the person who has committed it, or in a surety. And therefore with respect to those who believe not in a surety, and have no interest in him, the divine perfections require that this punishment should be inflicted on them.

This appears as it is not only not unsuitable that sin should be thus punished, but it is positively suitable, decent, and proper. — If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow that the perfections of God require it. For certainly the perfections of God require what is proper to be done. The perfection and excellency of God require that to take place which is perfect, excellent, and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally is such a thing, which appears by the following considerations.

1. It is suitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shown, is an infinite evil, and therefore is infinitely odious and detestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. And sin being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely.

2. If infinite hatred of sin be suitable to the divine character, then the *expressions* of such hatred are also suitable to this character. Because that which is suitable to be, is suitable to be expressed. That which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be suitable that God should be an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is suitable that he should *act* as such an enemy. If it be suitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is suitable for him to express that hatred and enmity in that to which hatred and enmity by its own nature tends. But certainly hatred in its own nature tends to

opposition, and to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil and not its good, and that in proportion to the hatred. Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil, of its object.

Whence it follows that if it be suitable that there should be infinite hatred of sin in God, as I have shown it is, it is suitable that he should execute an infinite punishment on it. And so the perfections of God require that he should punish sin with an infinite, or which is the same thing with an eternal, punishment.

Thus we see not only the great objection against this doctrine answered, but the truth of the doctrine established by reason. I now proceed further to establish it by considering the remaining particulars under the doctrine.

II. That eternal death or punishment which God threatens to the wicked, is not annihilation, but an abiding sensible punishment or misery. — The truth of this proposition will appear by the following particulars.

First, the Scripture everywhere represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings. But a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure, and much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an extreme pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity than they did suffer from eternity.

Second, it is agreeable both to Scripture and reason to suppose that the wicked shall be punished in such a manner that they shall be sensible of the punishment they are under: that they should be sensible that now God has executed and fulfilled what he threatened, what they disregarded and would not believe. They should know themselves that justice takes place upon them, that God vindicates that majesty which they despised, [and] that God is not so despicable a being as they thought him to be. They should be sensible for what they are punished, while they are under the threatened punishment. It is reasonable that they should be sensible of their own guilt, and should remember their former opportunities and obligations, and should see their own folly and God's justice. — If the

punishment threatened be eternal annihilation, they will never know that it is inflicted. They will never know that God is just in their punishment, or that they have their deserts. And how is this agreeable to the Scriptures, in which God threatens, that he will repay the wicked *to his face*, Deu. 7:10. And to that in Job 21:19, 20, "God rewardeth him, and he shall know it; his eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." And to that in Eze. 22:21, 22, "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." — And how is it agreeable to that expression so often annexed to the threatenings of God's wrath against wicked men, *And ye shall know that I am the Lord?*

Third, the Scripture teaches that the wicked will suffer different *degrees* of torment, according to the different aggravations of their sins. Mat. 5:22, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." Here Christ teaches us that the torments of wicked men will be different in different persons, according to the different degrees of their guilt. — It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon, than for the cities where most of Christ's mighty works were wrought. — Again, our Lord assures us that he that knows his Lord's will, and prepares not himself, nor does according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knows not, and commits things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. — These several passages of Scripture infallibly prove that there will be different degrees of punishment in hell, which is utterly inconsistent with the supposition that the punishment consists in *annihilation*, in which there can be *no degrees*.

Fourth, the Scriptures are very express and abundant in this matter: that the eternal punishment of the wicked will consist in sensible misery and torment, and not in annihilation. — What is said of Judas is worthy to be observed here, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born;" Mat. 26:24. — This seems plainly to teach us, that the punishment of the

wicked is such that their existence, upon the whole, is worse than non-existence. But if their punishment consists merely in annihilation, this is not true. — The wicked, in their punishment, are said to *weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth;* which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, and activity, and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment, Isa. 33:14. Sinners in the state of their punishment are represented to dwell with everlasting burnings. But if they are only turned into nothing, where is the foundation for this representation? It is absurd to say that sinners will dwell with annihilation, for there is no dwelling in the case. It is also absurd to call annihilation a burning, which implies a state of existence, sensibility, and extreme pain: whereas in annihilation there is neither.

It is said that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. How can this expression with any propriety be understood to mean a state of annihilation? Yea, they are expressly said to have no rest day nor night, but to be tormented with fire and brimstone forever and ever, Rev. 20:10. But annihilation is a state of rest, a state in which not the least torment can possibly be suffered. The rich man in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and entered into a particular conversation with Abraham: all which proves that he was not annihilated.

The spirits of ungodly men before the resurrection are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery. They are spirits in prison, as the apostle says of them that were drowned in the flood, 1 Pet. 3:19. — And this appears very plainly from the instance of the rich man before mentioned, if we consider him as representing the wicked in their separate state between death and the resurrection. But if the wicked even then are in a state of torment, much more will they be, when they shall come to suffer that which is the proper punishment of their sins.

Annihilation is not so great a calamity but that some men have undoubtedly chosen it, rather than a state of suffering even in this life. This was the case of Job, a good man. But if a good man in this world may suffer that which is worse than annihilation, doubtless the proper punishment of the wicked, in which God means to manifest his peculiar abhorrence of their wickedness, will be a calamity vastly greater still, and

therefore cannot be annihilation. That must be a very mean contemptible testimony of God's wrath towards those who have rebelled against his crown and dignity — broken his laws, and despised both his vengeance and his grace — which is not so great a calamity as some of his true children have suffered in life.

The eternal punishment of the wicked is said to be the *second death*, as Rev. 20:14, and 21:8. It is doubtless called the second death in reference to the death of the body, and as the death of the body is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked the *second death*. And there would be no propriety in calling it so, if it consisted merely in annihilation. And this second death wicked men will suffer, for it cannot be called the second death with respect to any other than men. It cannot be called so with respect to devils, as they die no temporal death, which is the first death. In Rev. 2:11, it is said, "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death;" implying that all who do not overcome their lusts, but live in sin, shall suffer the second death.

Again, wicked men will suffer the same kind of death with the devils; as in verse 41 of the context, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now the punishment of the devil is not annihilation, but torment. He therefore trembles for fear of it. not for fear of being annihilated — he would be glad of that. Where he is afraid of is torment, as appears by Luke 8:28, where he cries out and beseeches Christ that he would not torment him before the time. And it is said, Rev. 20:10, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever."

It is strange how men will go directly against so plain and full revelations of Scripture, as to suppose notwithstanding all these things, that the eternal punishment threatened against the wicked signifies no more than annihilation.

III. As the future punishment of the wicked consists in sensible misery, so it shall not only continue for a very long time, but shall be absolutely without end.

Of those who have held that the torments of hell are not absolutely eternal, there have been two sorts. Some suppose that in the threatenings of everlasting punishment, the terms used do not necessarily import a proper eternity, but only a very long duration. Others suppose that if they do import a proper eternity, yet we cannot necessarily conclude thence, that God will fulfill his threatenings. — Therefore I shall,

First, show that the threatenings of eternal punishment do very plainly and fully import a proper, absolute eternity, and not merely a long duration. — This appears,

1. Because when the Scripture speaks of the wicked being sentenced to their punishment at the time when all temporal things are come to an end, it then speaks of it as everlasting, as in the text, and elsewhere. It is true that the term forever is not always in Scripture used to signify eternity. Sometimes it means "as long as a man lives." In this sense it is said that the Hebrew servant, who chose to abide with his master, should have his ear bored and should serve his master forever. Sometimes it means "during the continuance of the state and church of the Jews." In this sense, several laws, which were peculiar to that church and were to continue in force no longer than that church should last, are called statutes forever. See Exo. 27:21, 28:43, etc. Sometimes it means as long as the world stands. So in Ecc. 1:4, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever."

And this last is the longest temporal duration that such a term is ever used to signify. For the duration of the world is the longest of things temporal, as its beginning was the earliest. Therefore when the Scripture speaks of things as being before the foundation of the world, it means that they existed before the beginning of time. So those things which continue after the end of the world, are eternal things. When heaven and earth are shaken and removed, those things that remain will be what cannot be shaken, but will remain forever, Heb. 12:26-27.

But the punishment of the wicked will not only remain after the end of the world, but is called everlasting, as in the text, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So in 2 Thes. 1:9-10, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and

from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," etc. — Now, what can be meant by a thing being everlasting, *after* all temporal things are come to an end, but that it is absolutely without end!

2. Such expressions are used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as are never used in the scriptures of the New Testament to signify anything but a proper eternity. It is said, not only that the punishment shall be forever, but *for ever and ever*. Rev. 14:11, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*." Rev. 20:10, "Shall be tormented day and night, *for ever and ever*." Doubtless the New Testament has some expression to signify a proper eternity, of which it has so often occasion to speak. But it has no higher expression than this: if this do not signify an absolute eternity, there is none that does.

3. The Scripture uses the same way of speaking to set forth the eternity of *punishment* and the eternity of *happiness*, yea, the eternity of God himself. Mat. 25:46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*." The words *everlasting* and *eternal*, in the original, are the very same. Rev. 22:5, "And they (the saints) shall reign *for ever and ever*." And the Scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of God himself, than that of his being *for ever and ever*, as Rev. 4:9, "To him who sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever;" and in the 10th verse, and in Rev. 5:14; 10:6, and 15:7.

Again, the Scripture expresses God's eternity by this: that it shall be *forever*, after the world is come to an end, Psa. 102:26-27, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

4. The Scripture says that wicked men shall not be delivered till they have paid the uttermost farthing of their debt, Mat. 5:26. The last mite, Luke 12:59, *i.e.* the utmost that is deserved, and all *mercy* is excluded by this expression. But we have shown that they *deserve* an infinite, an endless punishment.

5. The Scripture says absolutely that their punishment shall not have an

end, Mark 9:44, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now it will not do to say that the meaning is [that] their worm shall live a *great while*, or that it shall be a great while before their fire is quenched. If ever the time comes that their worm shall *die*, if ever there shall be a *quenching* of the fire at all, then it is not true that their worm *dieth not* and that the fire is *not quenched.* For if there be a dying of the worm and a quenching of the fire, let it be at what time it will, nearer or further off, it is equally contrary to such a negation — *it dieth not, it is not quenched.*

Second, there are others who allow that the expression of the threatenings do denote a proper eternity. But then, they say, it does not certainly follow that the punishment will really be eternal, because God may *threaten,* and yet not *fulfill* his threatenings. Though they allow that the threatenings are positive and peremptory, without any reserve, yet they say [that] God is not obliged to fulfill absolute positive threatenings, as he is absolute promises. Because in promises a right is conveyed that the creature to whom the promises are made will claim. But there is no danger of the creature's claiming any right by a threatening. Therefore I am now to show that what God has positively declared in this matter, does indeed make it certain that it shall be as he has declared. To this end, I shall mention two things:

1. It is evidently contrary to the divine *truth*, positively to declare anything to be real, whether past, present, or to come, which God at the same time knows is not so. Absolutely threatening that anything shall be, is the same as absolutely declaring that it is to be. For any to suppose that God absolutely declares that anything *will be,* which be at the same time knows *will not be,* is blasphemy, if there be any such thing as blasphemy.

Indeed, it is very true that there is no *obligation* on God, arising from the claim of the creature, as there is in promises. They seem to reckon the wrong way, who suppose the necessity of the execution of the threatening to arise from a proper obligation on God to the creature to execute consequent on his threatening. For indeed the certainty of the execution arises the other way, *viz.* on the obligation there was on the omniscient God, in threatening, to conform his threatening to what he knew would be future in execution. Though, strictly speaking, God is not properly

obliged to the creature to execute because he has threatened, yet he was obliged not *absolutely* to threaten, if at the same time he knew that he should not or would not fulfill, because this would not have been consistent with his truth. So that from the truth of God there is an inviolable connection between positive threatenings and execution. They who suppose that God positively declared that he would do contrary to what he knew would come to pass, do therein suppose, that he absolutely threatened contrary to what he knew to be *truth*. And how anyone can speak contrary to what he knows to be truth, in declaring, promising, or threatening, or any other way, consistently with inviolable truth, is inconceivable.

Threatenings are significations of something, and if they are made consistently with truth, they are true significations, or significations of truth, *that which shall be*. If absolute threatenings are significations of anything, they are significations of the *futurity* of the things threatened. But if the futurity of the things threatened be not true and real, then how can the threatening be a *true* signification? And if God, in them, speaks contrary to what he *knows*, and contrary to what he *intends*, how he can speak true is inconceivable.

Absolute threatenings are a kind of *predictions*. And though God is not properly *obliged* by any claim of ours to fulfill predictions, unless they are of the nature of promises, yet it certainly would be contrary to *truth*, to predict that such a thing would come to pass, which he knew at the same time would not come to pass. Threatenings are declarations of something future, and they must be declarations of future truth, if they are true declarations. Its being future alters not the case any more than if it were present. It is equally contrary to truth, to declare contrary to what at the same time is known to be truth, whether it be of things past, present, or to come: for all are alike to God.

Beside, we have often declarations in Scripture of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, in the proper form of *predictions*, and not in the form of *threatenings*. So in the text, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” So in those frequent assertions of eternal punishment in the Revelation, some of which I have already quoted. The Revelation is a *prophecy*, and is so called in the book itself. So are those

declarations of eternal punishment. — The like declarations we have also in many other places of Scripture.

2. The doctrine of those who teach that it is not certain that God will fulfill those absolute threatenings, is *blasphemous* another way, and that is, as God, according to their supposition, was obliged to make use of a *fallacy* to govern the world. They own that it is needful that men should *apprehend* themselves liable to an eternal punishment, that they might thereby be restrained from sin, and that God has threatened such a punishment, for the very end that they might *believe* themselves exposed to it. But what an unworthy opinion does this convey of God and his government, of his infinite majesty, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency! — Beside, they suppose that though God has made use of such a fallacy, yet it is not such an one but that they have *detected* him in it. Though God *intended* men should believe it to be certain that sinners are liable to an eternal punishment, yet they suppose that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain. And so that God had not laid his design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat and defeat the design, because they have found out that there is no necessary connection between the threatening of eternal punishment, and the execution of that threatening.

Considering these things, is it not greatly to be wondered at, that Archbishop Tillotson, who has made so great a figure among the new-fashioned divines, should advance such an opinion as this?

Before I conclude this head, it may be proper for me to answer an objection or two that may arise in the minds of some.

Objection 1. It may be here said [that] we have instances wherein God has not fulfilled his threatenings: as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should surely die, if they should eat the forbidden fruit. I answer, it is not true that God did not fulfill that threatening. He fulfilled it and will fulfill it in every jot and tittle. When God said, “Thou shalt surely die,” if we respect spiritual death, it was fulfilled in Adam’s person in the day that he ate. For immediately his image, his holy spirit and original righteousness, which was the highest and best life of our first parents, were lost, and they were immediately in a doleful state of

spiritual death.

If we respect temporal death, that was also fulfilled. He brought death upon himself and all his posterity, and he virtually suffered that death on that very day on which he ate. His body was brought into a corruptible, mortal, and dying condition, and so it continued till it was dissolved. If we look at all that death which was comprehended in the threatening, it was, properly speaking, fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, "If thou eatest, thou shalt die," he spoke not only to him, and of him personally, but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race, and doubtless were so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with him. The words do as justly allow of an imputation of death as of sin. They are as well consistent with *dying* in a surety, as with *sinning* in one. Therefore, the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety.

Objection 2. Another objection may arise from God's threatening to Nineveh. He threatened, that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet he did not fulfill. — I answer, that threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise than as *conditional*. It was of the nature of a *warning*, and not of an absolute denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but to give them warning, that they might have opportunity to repent, reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design or end in sending the prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, Judah and Jerusalem, before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with their prophecies of approaching destruction, joined earnest exhortations to repent and reform, that it might be averted.

No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, *continuing as it was*. For it was for their wickedness that that destruction was threatened, and so the Ninevites took it. Therefore, when the cause was removed, the effect ceased. It was contrary to God's known manner, to threaten punishment and destruction for sin in this world absolutely, so that it should come upon the persons threatened unavoidably, let them repent and reform and do what they would; Jer. 18:7, 8, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull

down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a *condition* implied in them, according to the known and declared manner of God's dealing. And the Ninevites did not take it as an *absolute* sentence of denunciation: if they had, they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the Word of God from which we can gather any condition. The only opportunity of escaping is in this world. This is the only state of trial, wherein we have any offers of mercy, or place for repentance.

IV. I shall mention several good and important *ends,* which will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

First, hereby God vindicates his injured *majesty*. Wherein sinners cast contempt upon it, and trample it in the dust, God vindicates and honors it and makes it appear, as it is indeed infinite, by showing that it is infinitely dreadful to condemn or offend it.

Second, God glorifies his *justice*. — The glory of God is the greatest good. It is that which is the chief end of the creation. It is of greater importance than anything else. But this one way wherein God will glorify himself, as in the eternal destruction of ungodly men, he will glorify his justice. Therein he will appear as a just governor of the world. The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious.

Third, God hereby indirectly glorifies his *grace* on the vessels of mercy. — The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned: "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Isa. 66:24, "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have trangressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And in Rev. 14:10 it is said, that they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. So they will be tormented in the presence also of the glorified saints.

Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is. When they shall see how great the misery is from which God has saved them, and how great a difference he has made between their state and the state of others, who were by nature (and perhaps for a time by practice) no more sinful and ill-deserving than any, it will give them a greater sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This the apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men; Rom. 9:22-23, "What if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known *the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

Fourth, the sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness, but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness. It will give them a more lively relish of it: it will make them prize it more. When they see others, who were of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, O it will make them sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.

The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God, manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favor and love vastly the more. And they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.

APPLICATION

I. From what has been said, we may learn the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary

gratification, they run the venture of enduring all these eternal torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little earthly honor and greatness, which can last but for a moment, to an escape from this punishment. If it be true that the torments of hell are eternal, what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What is there in this world, which is not a trifle and lighter than vanity, in comparison with these eternal things?

How mad are men, who so often hear of these things and pretend to believe them; who can live but a little while (a few years); who do not even expect to live here longer than others of their species ordinarily do; and who yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change and no end! How mad are they, when they hear that if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable — that they are not moved by it, but hear it with as much carelessness and coldness as if they were no way concerned in the matter — when they know not but that it may be their case, that they may be suffering these torments before a week is at an end!

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment! What a strange stupor and senselessness possesses the hearts of men! How common a thing is it to see men, who are told from Sabbath to Sabbath of eternal misery, and who are as mortal as other men, so careless about it that they seem not to be at all restrained by it from whatever their souls lust after! It is not half so much their care to escape eternal misery, as it is to get money and land, and to be considerable in the world, and to gratify their sense. Their thoughts are much more exercised about these things, and much more of their care and concern is about them. Eternal misery, though they lie every day exposed to it, is a thing neglected, it is but now and then thought of, and then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concern enough to stir them up to do anything considerable in order to escape it. They are not sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it. And if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you see it among young and old. Multitudes of youth lead a careless

life, taking little care about their salvation. So you may see it among persons of middle age, and with many advanced in years, and when they certainly draw near to the grave. — Yet these same persons will seem to acknowledge that the greater part of men go to hell and suffer eternal misery, and this through carelessness about it. However, they will do the same. How strange is it that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest, when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings: at the same time, having no lease of their lives and not knowing how soon the thread by which they hang will break. Nor indeed do they pretend to know. And if it breaks, they are gone: they are lost forever, and there is no remedy! Yet they trouble not themselves much about it, nor will they hearken to those who cry to them, and entreat them to take care for themselves, and labor to get out of that dangerous condition. They are not willing to take so much pains. They choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with toys and vanities. Thus, well might the wise man say, Ecc. 9:3, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil. Madness is in their heart while they live; and after that they go to the dead." — How much wiser are those few, who make it their main business to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation!

II. I shall improve this subject in a use of exhortation to sinners, to take care to escape these eternal torments. If they be eternal, one would think that would be enough to awaken your concern, and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite, as we said before. And therefore no other evil, no death, no temporary torment that ever you heard of, or that you can imagine, is anything in comparison with it, but is as much less and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it is less than the boundless space which encompasses the universe. — Therefore here,

First, be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing eternity is. Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. — Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever: to suffer it day and night from one year to another, from one age to another, and from one thousand ages to another (and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands), in pain, in wailing and

lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth — with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, [and] with your bodies and every member full of racking torture; without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better.

Second, do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them. To have no hope: when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice if you might but have any relief; after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it. After you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day and night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered. After you shall have worn a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments. But that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up forever and ever. Your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, will still exist to bear more wrath. Your bodies, which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through eternity, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.

You may by considering make yourselves more sensible than you ordinarily are. But it is a little you can conceive of what it is to have no hope in such torments. How sinking would it be to you, to endure such pain as you have felt in this world, without any hopes, and to know that you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest! You can now scarcely conceive how doleful that would be. How much more to endure the vast weight of the wrath of God without hope! The more the

damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing will it appear to them. And alas, they will not be able to keep it out of their minds! Their tortures will not divert them from it, but will fix their attention to it. O how dreadful will eternity appear to them after they shall have been thinking on it for ages together, and shall have so long an experience of their torments! The damned in hell will have two infinites perpetually to amaze them, and swallow them up: one is an infinite God, whose wrath they will bear, and in whom they will behold their perfect and irreconcilable enemy. The other is the infinite duration of their torment.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a comprehensive knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. The comprehensive view of so much sorrow, which they must endure, would cause infinite grief for the present. Though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it, yet they will doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it. — A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have a vastly more lively impression of eternity than he has, if he were only under some pretty sharp pain in some member of his body, and were at the same time assured that he must endure that pain forever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity than other men have. How much more will those excruciating torments, which the damned will suffer, have this effect!

Besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger in a future state, and God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity, as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment. — O be entreated, ye that are in a Christless state and are going on in a way to hell, that are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things. If you do not, it will surely be but a little while before you will experience them, and then you will know how dreadful it is to despair in hell. And it may be before this year, or this month, or this week, is at an end: before another Sabbath, or ever you shall have opportunity to hear another sermon.

Third, that you may effectually escape these dreadful and awful torments. Be entreated to flee and embrace him who came into the world for the

very end of saving sinners from these torments, who has paid the whole debt due to the divine law, and exhausted eternal in temporal sufferings. What great encouragement is it to those of you who are sensible that you are exposed to eternal punishment, that there is a Savior provided, who is able and who freely offers to save you from that punishment, and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God: yea, which is more to the glory of God than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell. For if you should suffer that punishment you would never pay the whole of the debt. Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God, nor indeed a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation. But it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to him, commit your souls to him to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For, as at the last day the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, so shall the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, go into life *eternal.*

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Wicked Men of the Past are Still in Hell

"By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, etc..." -- 1 Peter 3:19, 20

Two things it is my present purpose to observe concerning the spirits or souls of those wicked men that Noah preached to...

1. How long ago they lived.
2. How those souls are here spoken [of] as to their present state, “spirits in prison.”

DOCTRINE. — Those wicked men who lived before the flood, and went to Hell in Noah’s time, are there still.

1. I would give some reasons why they have remained in Hell so long.
2. Observe in some respects in what circumstances they remain there all this while.

I. Give some reasons.

Negatively.

1. ’Tis not because Hell has been tolerable to ’em.

2. ’Tis not because they ben’t convinced of their former folly…That they have not yet been brought to their right mind or to their judgment of things.

3. ’Tis not because they are careless about their own welfare and ease, and not willing to be at any possible labors or cost in order to escape, if there were any hope of deliverance. Not because they don’t wish and long… not thoroughly overwhelmed… not because they ben’t in earnest… that they ben’t thoroughly engaged in their spirits… not yet disposed to own that the courses that they went on going weren’t good… not disposed to attend to any offer of mercy… because they begrudge… would be unwilling to lay out themselves… not because they are covetous… not willing to be shown…

4. ’Tis not because they were weaker than the generality of men. Many of them were giants.

5. Not because there is not a great number of those who are disposed to unite their strength to burst prison.

Affirmatively.

1. Their souls are immortal… made for eternity… of a nature agreeable to this design…

Though they desire it, they can't return to nothing. "Seek death and cannot find it." Extreme torment, but no tendency to annihilate the soul… tendency to sink it, but not to reduce it to nothing. 'Tis not with the soul as 'tis with the body in its present mortal state… extreme oppression tends to destroy it.

2. They are not in a state of probation.

3. Their debt is what they can't pay…Great debt to Divine justice. Have not wherewith… Nothing to pay… Cast into prison till they should pay the last mite…

4. THERE IS NOT GOSPEL PREACHED IN HELL. Christ did not die for the damned… had no respect to that world… to those in this state… any more than to the devil. No means of grace Means of grace not accommodated to that state. No manner of provision made in any respect for their relief. No aid. Preaching of the Word don't reach them. The prayers of saints, of godly friends, don't reach them.

5. The place and state they are in was never designed for the exercise of mercy.

God is infinitely merciful; but the exercises of mercy are not for ever… Limited by Wisdom in various respects: has declared what the purposes of His wisdom are with respect to the exercises of His mercy. As to the kind of beings; fallen men and not angels… His declarations are according to truth… His purposes are not altered…

Hence no mercy in Hell… Though their pain is extreme… God don't pity 'em. Though their wishes for deliverance are great… though their cries are loud… though long continued… though it be exceeding intolerable.

6. By being longer in Hell, they have not become any more fit for any other state… don't make 'em better… although indeed their judgments are convinced, yet their hearts are the same. No change in their dispositions.

There are no conversions in Hell. he wrath makes a great change indeed; but no saving change. The wicked in Noah's days were most of them very wicked on earth, yet, in some respects, they become worse when they went to Hell. Not fit for Heaven. Not fit to come and live in this world. Fit for no other place. hat is the place provided and fitted for such.

7. The prison is strong that holds them. Delivered up into the hands of Satan… against whom they have no strength. And his cruelty is as strong as his power. And what is much more than devils, God confines them… irreversible sentence binds them. Omniscience opposes them. No escape by subtlety unobserved. Often here, in this world, persons break prison by stealth… get away by night, when no one observes them… And God's Almighty power holds 'em down. And God ever lives. He is unchangeable. He never will alter His purpose… never will forget His own Son… never will forget His righteous sentence…

II. Observe, in several things, in what circumstances they have been in , all this so long a time.

1. They have not been in a state of insensibility. "The Rich man." Not less their sensibility by long-continued torment and misery… hence not been deprived of the use of reason.

2. Have had no time of respite all this while. No rest. Rev. 14:11 — "No rest day nor night." Both day and night are mentioned, because the night in this world is a time of rest. Have never been asleep… never find any resting-place. Never find out any assuaging medicines… any cool shadows… cooling green… never found a drop of water… never found any expedient for mitigating their torment.

They have had much to goad 'em, in exercising their invention. Necessity is the mother of invention. But their inventions have not saved them… have had nothing to divert them…. no amusement to take off their attention….

3. Have not forgotten things that were so long ago, or when they were on earth. "Son, remember."… Will remember over all at the Day of Judgment. Have not forgotten pleasant circumstances they lived in …

swam in delights… their lives were long… the wickedness they committed… they opportunities they had… the warnings… Noah's preaching… their folly… the thoughts they had concerning God and His testimony.

4. Their misery is not grown more tolerable by their being so long used to it.

5. The great additions that have been made to the numbers from their time has been no comfort to 'em.

6. They have had no hope all this while… have none now… though their torments have been so long continued.

This is verified concerning all that go down to the pit of Hell. (Isa. 38:17-19) — "They that go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."

USE:

May be of warning: Let sinners in these days take warning. Those that now live in unbelief and impenitence are in danger of the same.

1. Let me call upon [you] seriously to consider how long a time those who have been spoken of have already worn out [themselves] in Hell: they have been there 4000 years. How many ages? How many and great changes, and successions, and transactions? How many generations have passed? How many successions of those who had come into being, gradually grown up, and grown old, and then died?

Not only have many generations gradually come upon the stage and have died; but many great and populous nations have come into being, and have flourished, and made a great figure in the world for many ages, and then by degrees have dwindled and wasted, swallowed up by other nations and come to nothing, and nothing of them now know but by history. And some of them very ancient and powerful, so that even the very history of them is almost come to nothing and vanished; and all since they have been suffering the flames of Hell, without any cessation or rest. The world has been peopled… subdued… many mighty princes

have appeared and made a good bustle, and none… whose memory is now almost forgotten… Very great and magnificent cities… and not 'tis hardly to be known where they stood. Many kingdoms, yea, many great monarchies.. Those four monarchies of the world. How many things have worn out! The strongest fortunes…. strongest empires… most durable monuments…. pillars of brass… monuments of marble stone… Languages used as the common speech of large countries. Such things have gradually perished, and length of time worn 'em out; but yet the torments of the "spirits in prison" yet remains… not come to nothing… are as fresh and lively and in as great vigor as the first moment.

The souls who are the subjects of these miseries were sinners, and their miseries immortal. Since they have been in Hell there has been a long series of wonderful dispensations of God towards His Church and the whole world. After the flood, the nations degenerated… fell off to idolatry… Abraham was 'called'… children of Jacob became a great nation… Christ was foretold of old, from time to time.. anciently prefigured… and in the fullness of time Christ actually came into the world… all these ancient prophecies and ancient types were fulfilled… the Jews, God's ancient people, rejected… Gentiles called… prophecies were given … a mighty change made in the Roman kingdom… Antichrist arose… reigned for long time… but at length the Reformation came… During all those mighty changes on earth those souls spoken of in the doctrine, continued without ease day or night or one minute's respite, wrestling with the mighty torments of Hell; and so they continue still… torment not abated. These great and mighty changes on earth have not affected them to cause any change there. There have been many good times on earth: days of great good; but…

2. How we may suppose the things which they remember of their past lives now affects them… their worldly enjoyments… the length of the time of their past ease and pleasures… they lived long lives… their past opportunities… their long warnings… the preaching they had… their folly and stupidity… obstinacy…

3. How many since have followed their steps and have gone to Hell in like manner. 'Tis not the manner of men to take warning by those that perish before them… Those that are gone before can see the folly of those that

come after, whom it will do no good. The rich man in Hell. Those that went to Hell in Noah's day, see the folly of those that come to 'em from generation to generation. But those that follow after don't see the folly of those who went before, and so they follow them...

4. They that have worn out so many ages in Hell, are never the nearer any end of their misery. he time is very long that they have suffered.... many tedious days... tedious years... and tedious ages one after another... They must wear out another space of time as long as this in Hell flames, and another after that... Soon the time will come when they will actually have worn out a million such as... yea, a million and millions... God foresees the time... knows the particular passage of the day. Yea, as many such ages as there are particles of dust on the globe of the earth... And even then NO MERCY. It will be without end. FOR EVER, YEA, FOREVER. Therefore take warning. If you neglect to take warning you will go to Hell... and the time will come when you will have been as long as they now have been... and you must also be there millions of millions... and you will be your wishes, and cries, and strength, and entreaties will be in vain. You in like manner will reflect on and curse your folly.

5. The torment that those spoken of in the doctrine have endured for so long a time, is but an imprisonment in order to execution. "Spirits *in prison*." "Chains of darkness." There is another day. Their misery is great now. We learn by the parable of Dives and Lazarus... I know nothing by which it can be determined that the misery will not be a thousand times as great... They 'tremble.' The chains are strong. There is not hope... no relief to them.

6. The means and opportunities they enjoyed were nothing to yours. Little revelation of a future state.

7. God has an appointed time to wait on you. 'The Spirit will not always strive.'

8. Consider the sudden, unexpected manner in which they were destroyed (Luke 17:26, 27). ... You will probably be surprised as they were. They had as much reason to flatter themselves as you, (Job 27:20). — "A tempest stealeth him away in the night."

DIRECTIONS:

1. Avoid those things by which the men that went to Hell in Noah's time undid themselves... particularly sensuality, (Gen. 6; Luke 17:27). ... So it was with Sodom. Violence. "Evil imagination." They would not hearken. They grew hardened to long-continued calls and warnings... habitually made light. Is their not reason to apprehend that this is the case with many here? You must reform your life... thorough reformation...

2. You must in this respect be as Noah was in the generation of those souls that are "castaways;" particularly

1. You must avoid those liberties of young people that are customary.

2. Another thing that is apparently become customary, and doubtless is very provoking to God, is pride and extravagance in apparel. Not that I condemn all adorning the body. 'Tis evident by Scripture that some moderate degree of this is lawful. Oil that makes his face to shine, (Ecc. 9:8; Mat. 6:17; Pro. 31:21, 22; Exo. 3:22). But ye 'tis apparent that there is a most sinful extravagance in this kind, (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4; Isa. 3:16, 18 etc.). Appears to be very provoking to God.... when persons go beyond their rank. One end of apparel seems to be to distinguish. (Pro. 31:22, 23). Common people to show an affectation to be like those of high rank; country towns to affect to be like the metropolis. When they go beyond their estate, disable themselves from paying their debts; deprive themselves of other things more necessary and more profitable; disable themselves much from deeds of charity. An affection to distinguish themselves in imitating the fashions of the more gay part of the world. Complying with the general customs of a country in clothing is not vulgar. On the contrary, 'tis not decent to be singular. But some fashions in themselves are ill... extravagance... very costly... immodest...

All this care, and pains, and cost to adorn themselves shows persons to much affect outward ornament... seem to show that they make much of themselves... all that which tends to encourage a general excess. Such things as these have been condemned by wise men of all nations.

'Tis a time when the nations here have got to a vast excess. The land is

become exceeding extravagant. More so than in England in proportion to our ability and ranks. Prevents great good that might be done… is continually running in debt. The main thing that brings our greatest national calamities.. particularly the present state the country is in with regard to a medium. *2* And is the main source of that general injustice that has been so long complained of… keeps the country in constant distress… maintains constant injustice… threatens us with ruin… We in this town *3* are evidently got to a great excess. Boston is extravagant beyond London. And we, considering all things, I think beyond them… how far below we fall short in rank… state… education and our situation in the world… far beyond them.

I had occasion to observe the people at Portsmouth, in both the congregations in that place. That is a place very much famed for politeness, and is a city much like Boston in many respects. I judged the apparel of our congregation was fully as costly. Many things that might make it proper for them to go beyond us.

Such excess in gaiety and coastlines of apparel is a manifestation of great vanity of mind. It seems to show a great senselessness of our own vileness… becomes us to go modestly … modest apparel would better become such sinful creatures. Do not consider the end for which clothing was given… to hide our shame… that deformity that is the first of sin… senselessness of what our bodies are coming to … shows vanity of mind, as it shows the heart to be set on that which is exceeding vain and empty… great want of a sense of the worth of those spiritual ornaments that are infinitely more valuable.

If persons had a proper concern for their soul, there surely would not appear very much affectation to…

If religion should greatly revive it would undoubtedly make a great alteration.

This is one thing, among others, that tends to prevent its reviving.

God has of late awfully testified His displeasure for the extravagance of the country's manner of living.

3. You must not only seek, but strive. You must make it a business… main business… thorough… How plain the necessity of it! How often the Word of God! How plain by experience! On many accounts necessary… How much you have had to convince you of the necessity! And are you, after all, in any sense awake? And how can you excuse this folly?

4. Be seasonable.

The sinners of the old world perished by the Flood because they were not seasonable. They doubtless, many of them, used means afterwards. Had need to make haste… So we are directed from time to time. “Haste”… “escape for thy LIFE.” On many accounts necessary. How many have we reason to think perish through delay!

5. Not only engage in but go through that great work that is necessary in order to your escaping eternal damnation.

Do in this respect as Noah did for the saving himself and his house from the Flood.

6. Don’t waste time in halting between two opinions.

How there seem to be some things that give special encouragement.

Isa. 55:6, 7.

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The Way of Holiness

"And an highway shall be and a way, way, it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." -- Isaiah 35:8

This Book of Isaiah speaks so much of Christ, gives such a particular account of the birth, life, miracles and passion, and of the gospel state, that it has been called a fifth Gospel. In this chapter is contained a glorious prophecy of the evangelical state:

1. We have a description of the flourishing state of Christ's kingdom in the two first verses, in the conversion and enlightening of the heathen, here compared to a wilderness, and a desert, solitary place:

   > The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

2. The great privileges and precious advantages of the gospel, in the five following verses wherein the strength, the courage, the reward, the salvation, the light and understanding, comforts and joys, that are conferred thereby, are very aptly described and set forth:

   Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God

will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert , And the parched ground Shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

3. The nature of the gospel, and way of salvation therein brought to light. First, the holy nature of it, in the eighth and ninth verses:

    1. And an highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way o holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.

    2. The joyful nature of it, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" [v.10].

Observations

1. Observe in our text the subject spoken, that is, the way to salvation: "An highway shall be there, and a way." This highway is the common and only way to heaven, for the way to heaven is but one. There is none ever get to heaven except they walk in this way some men don't get to heaven one way and others another, but it i. one highway that

is always traveled by those that obtain heaven.

It is the same narrow way that Christ tells us of. Some don't go to heaven in a broad way, and others in a narrow; some in an easy and others in a difficult way; some in a way of selfdenial and mortification, and others in a way of enjoyment of their lusts and sinful plea sures; some up hill and others down: but the way to heaven is the same, and it is the highway here spoken of. There is only one highway or common road, and no by-paths that some few go to heaven in, a' exceptions from the rest.

If we seek never so diligently, we shall never find out an easier we, to heaven than that which Christ has revealed to us. We cannot find a broader way, but if we go to heaven, the way is so narrow that we must rub hard to get along and press forward. The kingdom of heaven must suffer violence; it must be taken by force, or else it never will be taken at all. If we don't go by the footsteps of the flock, we shall never find the place where Christ feeds, and where he makes his flock to rest at noon.

It appears that the way here spoken of is the way of salvation, by the last verse of the chapter. When speaking of this way, it is said, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion," etc. "Zion" is the common appellation by which, in the Old Testament, the church both militant and triumphant is signified.

2. In the words observe the holy nature of this way described: first, by the name by which it is called, "the way of holiness"; "and it shall be called the way of holiness." Secondly, the holiness of those that travel in it, and its purity from those that are unclean, or unholy; "the unclean shall not pass over it." No wicked person shall ever travel in this way of holiness. To the same purpose is the next verse, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there." That is, none of the wicked men of this world, which are like lions or ravenous beasts more than like men: in their eager raging and lustful appetites and evil affections, or by their insatiable

covetousness, are like hungry wolves, are violently set upon the world and will have it, whether by right or by wrong. Or make themselves like ravenous beasts by their proud, invidious, malicious dispositions, which is directly contrary to a Christian spirit and temper. They are more like wild beasts than Christians, that are wrongful and injurious, are all for themselves and the satisfying their own appetites, and care nothing for the welfare of others, their fellowmen that are of the same blood, make a god of their bellies, and therein resemble tigers and wolves.

"Now," says the Prophet, "none such shall go upon this highway to Zion; such unclean and ravenous beasts shall not be found there. No, but the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion." This way is a way of holiness and not to be defiled by wicked persons. That in Rev. 21:27 will serve well for an explication of these words: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

DOCTRINE

Those only that are holy are in the way to heaven.

Many are not sensible enough of the necessity of holiness in order to salvation. Everyone hopes for heaven, but if everyone that hoped for heaven ever got there, heaven by this time would have been full of murderers, adulterers, common swearers, drunkards, thieves, robbers,, and licentious debauchers. It would have been full of all manner of wickedness and wicked men, such as the earth abounds with at this day. There would have been those there that are no better than wild beasts, howling wolves, and poisonous serpents; yea, devils incarnate, as Judas was.

What a wretched place would the highest heavens have been by this time if it were so: that pure, undefiled, light and glorious place, the heavenly temple, would be as the temple of Jerusalem was in Christ's

time, a den of thieves; and the royal palace of the Most High the holy metropolis of the creation, would be turned into a mere hell. There would be no happiness there for those that are holy. What a horrible, dreadful confusion would there be if the glorious presence of God the Father; the glorified Lamb of God; and the Heavenly Dove, spirit of all grace and original of all holiness; the spotless, glorified saints; the holy angels; and wicked men, beasts and devils were all mixed up together!

Therefore, it behooves us all to be sensible of the necessity of holiness in order to salvation; of the necessity of real, hearty and sincere inward and spiritual holiness, such as will stand by us forever and will not leave us at death, that sinners may not be so foolish as to entertain hopes of heaven, except they intend forthwith to set about repentance and reformation of heart and life. Wherefore, this is what we are now upon: to show the necessity of holiness, and this we shall do in these three things.

1. Show what holiness is.

2. That those that have it not are not in the way to heaven.

3. The reasons why it must needs be so.

1. What is holiness? I shall answer to this question in three things which fully comprehend the nature of holiness, which are not in themselves distinct as so many parts of holiness, but the same thing

in three different lights, to give us the fuller understanding of it.

1. Holiness is a conformity of the heart and the life unto God. Whatever outward appearance men may make by their external actions, as if they were holy, yet if it proceeds not from a most inward hearty and sincere holiness within, it is nothing. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart all that he did was not acceptable to God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

   And whatever holiness they may pretend to have in their hearts, whatever hypocritical pangs of affection they may have had, it is all to no purpose except it manifest itself in the holiness of their lives and conversations: Jas. 1: 2627, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And in the second chapter, eighteenth verse: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." And in the nineteenth and twentieth verses, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" So that there must be a conformity of both heart and life to God, in order to true holiness.

   Holiness is the image of God, his likeness, in him that is holy. By being conformed unto God is not meant a conformity to him in his eternity, or infinity, or infinite power. These are God's inimitable and incommunicable attributes; but a conformity to his will, whereby he wills things that are just, right, and truly excellent and lovely; whereby he wills real perfection, and goodness; and perfectly abhors everything that is really evil,

unjust, and unreasonable. And it is not only a willing as God wills, but also a doing as he cloth: in acting holily and justly and wisely and mercifully, like him. It must become natural thus to be, and thus to act; it must be the constant inclination and new nature of the soul, and then the man is holy, and not before.

2. It is a conformity to Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus is perfectly conformed unto God, for he is God. He is his express image. Now Christ is nearer to us in some respects than God the Father, for he is our Mediator and is more immediately conversant with us; John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Jesus Christ, he has been with us in the flesh and as one of us he appeared in the form of a servant, and we have seen his holiness brightly shining forth in all his actions. We have seen his holy life; we have a copy drawn, and an example set for us.

   Now holiness is a conformity unto this copy: he that copies after Jesus Christ, after that copy which he has set us and which is delivered to us by the evangelists, is holy. He that diligently observes the life of Christ in the New Testament need not be at a loss to know what holiness is. Christ commands us to follow his example: Matt. 11 l :29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

   Have you ever read the four Gospels, and did you not observe in the life of Christ wonderful instances of humility, love to God, love to religion; wonderful instances of zeal for God's glory, steadfastness in resisting temptations, entire trust and reliance on God, strict adherence to all his commands; astonishing instances of condescension, humility, meekness, lowliness, love to men, love to his enemies, charity and patience? Why, this is holiness. When we imitate Christ in these things, then are we holy, and not till then.

3. Holiness is a conformity to God's laws and commands. When all God's laws without exception are written in our hearts, then are we holy. If you can go along with David in Psalm 119, where he speaks of his love and delight in God's law, in your own experience; when a man feels in some good measure what David declares concerning himself towards the law of God, then may God's law be said to be written in his heart. By God's law I mean all his precepts and commands, especially as they are delivered to us in the gospel, which is the fulfillment of the law of God. If you feel Christ's Sermon upon the Mount engraver on the fleshly tables of your hearts, you are truly sanctified.

   The new covenant is written in the hearts of those that are sanctified, of which the prophet Jeremiah speaks, 31:31,33, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. This shall be my covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

   The commands and precepts which God has given us are all pure, perfect, and holy. They are the holiness of God in writing, and, when the soul is conformed to them, they have holiness of God upon their hearts; 11 Cor. 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." When the soul is molded and fashioned according to the image of God, the example of Christ and the rules . gospel, then it is holy, and not else.

2. Those that have not this holiness are not in the way to heaven. Those that are not thus conformed to God, to Christ, and God's commands,

are not in the way to heaven and happiness; they are not traveling that road; the road they are in will never bring them there. Whatever hopes and expectations they may have, they will never reach heaven to eternity except they alter their course, turn about, and steer [towards] another point; for the way is a way of holiness, and the unclean shall not pass over it. Christ said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven, but yet he left it absolutely possible with God that it might be; but he said positively and without exception that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. None but those that are holy are in the way to heaven, whatever profession they may make, whatever church they may be in: for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Whatever external acts of religion they may perform, however they may be constant attendants on the public or family worship, and live outwardly moral lives; yea, what is more, if they speak with the tongues of men and angels, though they could prophesy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though they have faith that they can remove mountains; though they bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and though they give their very bodies to be burnt: yet if they have not charity or holiness which is the same thing, for by charity is intended love to God as well as man though they have and do all those things, yet they are nothing; they are as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal (see I Cor. 13). It is good that we should be thoroughly convinced of the most absolute and indispensable necessity of a real, spiritual, active and vital yea, immortal holiness.

3. We shall now, in the third place, give the reasons why none that are not holy can be in the way to heaven, and why those who never are so can never obtain the happiness thereof.

4. 'Tis contrary to God's justice, to make a wicked man eternally happy. God is a God of infinite justice, and his justice (to speak after the manner of men) "obliges" him to punish sin eternally; sin must be punished, the sins of all men must be punished. If the sinner retains his sin, and it is not washed off by the blood of Christ, and he purified and sanctified and made holy, it must be punished upon him. If he is sanctified, his sin has been already punished in the passion of Christ, but if not, it still remains to be punished in his eternal ruin and misery; for God has said that he is a holy and jealous God, and will by no means clear the guilty. It is reckoned amongst the rest of God's attributes which he proclaims in Ex. 34:7 and Num. 14 18.

5. 'Tis impossible by reason of God's holiness, that anything should be united to God and brought to the enjoyment of him which is not holy. Now is it possible that a God of infinite holiness, that is perfect and hates sin with perfect hatred, that is infinitely lovely and excellent, should embrace in his arms a filthy, abominable creature, a hideous, detestable monster, more hateful than a toad and more poisonous than a viper? But so hateful, base, and abominable is every unsanctified man, even the best hypocrite and most painted sepulchers of them all.

   How impossible is it that this should be, that such loathsome beings, the picture of the devil, should be united to God: should be a member of Christ, a child of God, be made happy in the enjoyment of his love and the smiles of his countenance, should be in God and God in them? It is therefore as impossible for an unholy thing to be admitted unto the happiness of heaven as it is for God not to be, or be turned to nothing. For it is as impossible that God should love sin as it is for him to cease to be, and it is as impossible for him to love a wicked man that has not his sin purified, and it is as impossible for him to enjoy the happiness of heaven except God love him, for the happiness of heaven consists in the enjoyment of God's love.

6. It would defile heaven and interrupt the happiness of the saints and angels. It would defile that holy place, the Holy of Holies, and would fright and terrify the sanctified spirits, and obstruct them in their delightful ecstasies of devotion, and his praise would quite confound the heavenly society. How would one unsanctified person interrupt their happiness, and fill those regions all over with the loathsome stench of his sin and filthiness!

7. The nature of sin necessarily implies, misery. That soul that remains sinful must of a necessity of nature remain miserable, for it is impossible there should be any happiness where such a hateful thing as sin reigns and bears rule. Sin is the most cruel tyrant that ever ruled, seeks nothing but the misery of his subjects; as in the very keeping of God's commands there is great reward, so in the very breaking of them there is great punishment.

   Sin is a woeful confusion and dreadful disorder in the soul, whereby everything is put out of place, reason trampled under foot and passion advanced in the room of it, conscience dethroned and abominable lusts reigning. As long as it is so, there will unavoidably be a dreadful confusion and perturbation in the mind; the soul will be full of worry, perplexities, uneasinesses, storms and frights, and thus it must necessarily be to all eternity, except the Spirit of God puts all to rights. So that if it were possible that God should desire to make a wicked man happy while he is wicked, the nature of the thing would not allow of it, but it would be simply and absolutely impossible.

   Thus I have given some reasons of the doctrine, why it must needs be that those that are not holy cannot be in the way to heaven. Many more reasons might be offered, which the time will not allow to take notice of at this time; but these alone would have been enough to certify us that none but those who are holy ever attain to a crown of glory, if God had not expressly said that without holiness no man should see the Lord.

APPLICATION

We shall apply this doctrine in three uses:

1. of inference;

2. of trial or selfexamination;

3. of exhortation.

1. Use of Inf. If it be so that none but those that are holy are in the way to heaven, how many poor creatures are there that think they are in the way to heaven who are not? There are many that think that they are undoubtedly in the way to heaven, and without question shall enter there at last, that have not the least grain of true holiness, that manifest none in their lives and conversations, of whom we may be certain that either they have no holiness at all, or that which they have is a dormant, inactive sort which is in effect to be certain that there is none. There are a great many others that are not so distinctly and plainly perceived, that have nothing but what is external, the shell without the kernel. Vast multitudes are of these two kinds.

   What a pitiable, miserable condition are they in: to step out of this world into an uncertain eternity, with an expectation of finding themselves exceeding happy and blessed in the highest heaven, and all at once find themselves deceived, and are undeceived, finding themselves sinking in the bottomless pit!

2. Use of Trial. If none are in the way to heaven but those that are holy, let us try and examine ourselves by this doctrine to see whereabouts we are, and see whether or no we are in the way to heaven. To know which way we are going, whether towards Canaan or Egypt, whether towards heaven or hell; for if we think ourselves in the road to heaven, and are going to the place of torment all the while, and continue deceived, without doubt fire and brimstone will undeceive us. If we find ourselves in the broad way to destruction, how dare we stir a step further? If we would know whether we are holy or no, let us try ourselves by these five following things:

    1. Meditate on the holiness of God, and see if you cannot see a conformity, a *likeness* in your mind. There is no likeness or comparison in degree-we speak not of that-but yet there is a likeness in *nature* between Cod and the soul of the believer. The holy soul, when it thinks and meditates upon God's nature, finds a pleasure and delight, because there is an agreeableness in his new nature to the divine perfections. If those that think themselves in the way to heaven, that are unholy in the meantime in their hearts, would compare themselves and their nature to the holy nature of God, such a glorious light as the holiness of God would quickly discover their rottenness and unsoundness.

    2. See if you can see any resemblance in your life to the life of Christ. It is not supposed that ever any copy comes near to this original, nor ever will; but yet they may perceive whether the same spirit, the same temper and disposition, in a lesser degree be in them, that was manifested by the life and conversation of Jesus Christ.

3. Is there an agreeableness between your souls and the Word of God? The Bible is the epistle of Christ that he has written to us now, if the same epistle is also written in our hearts that is written in the Scriptures, it may be found out by comparing. Have you love to all God's commands and a respect to them in your actions? Is it your delight to obey and hearken to the will of God? Do you obey them of choice? Is it what you would choose to do if God had not threatened to punish the breach of them?

4. Do you find by a comparison a likeness and agreeableness between your hearts and lives, and the hearts and lives of those holy men that we are assured were such by the Word of God? Do you walk with God as Enoch did, or distinguish yourselves by your piety in the midst of wicked examples as Noah did? And when you read the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the prophets, wherein holiness is drawn to the life, you may viewing so exact a picture discover whether you have not the root of the matter in you, though it be much obscurer in you than in them. When we read the Psalms of David, we may clearly see what David's holiness was by that spirit that is breathed there; when we read the Epistles of the apostles, we may know what is a truly evangelical spirit, and whether such a spirit reigns in our souls.

5. Do you in a measure imitate the saints and angels in heaven? They spend their duration to the glory of God; they love him above all things, are delighted with the beauties of Jesus Christ, entirely love one another, and hate sin. And those that are holy on earth have also a resemblance and imitation of them: they are of an heavenly temper, of heavenly lives and conversations.

3. Use of l Exhortation. Exhort all to holiness. You have heard what

> holiness is and of the necessity of it, the absolute necessity in order to escaping hell; what we must have or die forever, must be forever forsaken Now, nothing is so necessary to us as holiness; other things may be necessary to discover this life, and things that are necessary men will strive for with all their might, if there is a probability of obtaining of them. How much more is that to be sought after, without which we shall fare infinitely worse than die ten thousand deaths!
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> This is motive enough without any other; for what can be a greater motive than necessity? But besides that, if it were not necessary, the amiable and excellent nature of it is enough to make it worthy the most earnest seeking after.

Holiness is a most beautiful, lovely thing. Men are apt to drink in strange notions of holiness from their childhood, as if it were a melancholy, morose, sour, and unpleasant thing; but there is nothing in it but what is sweet and ravishingly lovely. 'Tis the highest beauty and amiableness, vastly above all other beauties; 'tis a divine beauty, makes the soul heavenly and far purer than anything here on earth-this world is like mire and filth and defilement [compared] to that soul which is sanctified-'tis of a sweet, lovely, delightful, serene, calm, and still nature. 'Tis almost too high a beauty for any creature to be adorned with; it makes the soul a little, amiable, and delightful image of the blessed Jehovah. How may angels stand with pleased, delighted, and charmed eyes, and look and look with smiles of pleasure upon that soul that is holy!

Christian holiness is above all the heathen virtue, of a more bright and pure nature, more serene, calm, peaceful, and delightsome. What a sweet calmness, what a calm ecstasy, cloth it bring to the soul! Of what a meek and humble nature is true holiness; how peaceful and quiet. How cloth it change the soul, and make it more pure, more bright, and more excellent than other beings.

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Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." [1 John 4:1]

In the apostolic age, there was the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that ever was; both as to his extraordinary influences and gifts, and his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles' writings. This made it very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without danger of being imposed upon. The giving of such rules is the plain design of this chapter, where we have this matter more expressly and fully treated of than any where else in the Bible. The apostle, of set purpose, undertakes to supply the church of God with such marks of the true Spirit as may be plain and safe, and well accommodated to use and practice; and that the subject might be clearly and sufficiently handled, he insists upon it throughout the chapter, which makes it wonderful that what is here said is no more taken notice of in this extraordinary day, when there is such an uncommon and extensive operation on the minds of people, such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the work of the Spirit.

The apostle's discourse on this subject is introduced by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the Spirit, as the sure evidence of an interest

in Christ. “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” Whence we may infer, that the design of the apostle is not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the true Spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people, in order to their union to Christ, and being built up in him; which is also manifest from the marks themselves that are given, which we shall hereafter notice.

The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse of the distinguishing signs of the true and false Spirit.--Before the apostle proceeds to lay down these signs, he exhorteth Christians, first, against an over credulousness, and a forwardness to admit every specious appearance as the work of a true Spirit. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” And, second, he shows, that there were many counterfeits, “because many false prophets were gone out into the world.” These did not only pretend to have the Spirit of God in his extraordinary gifts of inspiration, but also to be the great friends and favourites of heaven, to be eminently holy persons, and to have much of the ordinary saving, sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God on their hearts. Hence we are to look upon these words as a direction to examine and try their pretences to the Spirit of God, in both these respects.

My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others. And here I would observe, that we are to take the *Scriptures* as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church, in order to guide them in things relating to the great concerns of their souls; and it is an infallible and sufficient rule. There are undoubtedly sufficient marks given to guide the church of God in this great affair of judging of spirits, without which it would lie open to woeful delusion, and would be remedilessly exposed to be imposed on and devoured by its enemies. And we need not be afraid to trust these rules. Doubtless that Spirit who indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him. And this, as I observed before, the Spirit of

God has here done of set purpose, and done it more particularly and fully than any where else: so that in my present discourse I shall go no where else for rules or marks for the trial of spirits, but shall confine myself to those that I find in this chapter.--But before I proceed particularly to speak to these, I would prepare my way by, FIRST, observing *negatively*, in some instances, what are *not signs* or evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

SECT. 1.

Negative Signs; *or*, *What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work--and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God.*

NOTHING can be certainly concluded from this, That a work is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of scripture rules. What the church has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge; because there may be new and extraordinary works of God, and he has heretofore evidently wrought in an extraordinary manner. He has brought to pass new things, strange works; and has wrought in such a manner as to surprise both men and angels. And as God has done thus in times past, so we have no reason to think but that he will do so still. The prophecies of Scripture give us reason to think that God has things to accomplish, which have never yet been seen. No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, if it be no deviation from his prescribed rule. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in his operation; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he may use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself.

I. Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced.

If they seem to have an extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin, and a very uncommon sense of the misery of a Christless condition--

or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of divine things,--and are proportionably moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, love, or joy: or if the apparent change be very sudden, and the work be carried on with very unusual swiftness--and the persons affected are very numerous, and many of them are very young, with other unusual circumstances, not infringing upon scripture marks of a work of the Spirit--these things are no argument that the work is not of the Spirit of God.--The extraordinary and unusual degree of influence, and power of operation, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in Scripture, is rather an argument in its favour; for by how much higher the degree which in its nature is agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule; and so much the more evident that conformity. When things are in small degrees, though they be really agreeable to the rule, it is not so easily seen whether their nature agrees with the rule.

There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially elderly persons, to think that to be right which they have never been used to in their day, and have not heard of in the days of their day, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it be a good argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it is very unusual, then it was so in the apostles' days. The work of the Spirit then, was carried on in a manner that, in very many respects, was altogether new; such as never had been seen or heard since the world stood. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever; nor had there been seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God in sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in great multitudes--such a sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work--and many other extraordinary circumstances might be mentioned. The great unusualness of the work surprised the Jews; they knew not what to make of it, but could not believe it to be the work of God: many looked upon the persons that were the subjects of it as bereft of reason; as you may see in Acts ii. 13. xxvi. 24. and 1 Cor. iv. 10.

And we have reason from scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of that last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God,

that is to be in the latter ages of the world, the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, and such as never has yet been seen; so that there shall be occasion then to say, as in Isa. lxvi. 8. “Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” It may be reasonably expected that the extraordinary manner of the work then, will bear some proportion to the very extraordinary events, and that glorious change in the state of the world, which God will bring to pass by it.

II. A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength.

The influence persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or other, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule. We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true Spirit because we see such effects upon their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit; nor on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of Scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects on the body, nor does reason exclude them. It is easily accounted for from the consideration of the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a right influence, a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind, such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries. There are none of us but do suppose, and would have been ready at any time to say it, that the misery of hell is doubtless so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more that his feeble frame could bear, and especially if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it, and to be utterly uncertain whether he should be delivered from it, yea, and to have no security from it one day or hour. If we consider human nature, we must not wonder, that when persons have

a great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also have a great view of their own wickedness and God's anger, that things seem to them to forebode speedy and immediate destruction. We see the nature of man to be such that when he is in danger of some terrible calamity to which he is greatly exposed, he is ready upon every occasion to think, that *now* it is coming.--When persons' hearts are full of fear, in time of war, they are ready to tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and to expect the enemy every minute, and to say within themselves, *now* I shall be slain. If we should suppose that a person saw himself hanging over a great pit, full of fierce and glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient to bear his weight, and knew that multitudes had been in such circumstances before, and that most of them had fallen and perished, and saw nothing within reach, that he could take hold of to save him, what distress would he be in! How ready to think that *now* the thread was breaking, that now, *this minute*, he should be swallowed up in those dreadful flames! And would not he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this manner hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, who at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked! No wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.

So it may easily be accounted for, that a true sense of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his wonderful dying love, and the exercise of a truly spiritual love and joy, should be such as very much to overcome the bodily strength. We are all ready to own, that no man can see God and live, and that it is but a very small part of that apprehension of the glory and love of Christ, which the saints enjoy in heaven, that our present frame can bear; therefore it is not at all strange that God should sometimes give his saints such foretastes of heaven, as to diminish their bodily strength. If it was not unaccountable that the queen of Sheba fainted, and had her bodily strength taken away, when she came to see the glory of Solomon, much less is it unaccountable that she who is the antitype of the queen of Sheba, (*viz.*) the Church, that is brought, as it were, from the utmost ends of the earth, from being an alien and stranger, far off, in a state of sin and misery, should faint when she comes to see the glory of Christ, who is the antitype of Solomon; and especially

will be so in that prosperous, peaceful, glorious kingdom, which he will set up in the world in its latter age.

Some object against such extraordinary appearances, that we have no instances of them recorded in the New Testament, under the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit. Were this allowed, I can see no force in the objection, if neither reason, nor any rule of Scripture, exclude such things; especially considering what was observed under the foregoing particular. I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person's weeping, or groaning, or sighing through fear of hell, or a sense of God's anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue, that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scripture informs us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God's Spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects. Nobody supposes that there is any need of express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind: and though such circumstances are not particularly recorded in sacred history, yet there is a great deal of reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that it could not be otherwise than that such things must be in those days. And there is also reason to think, that such great outpouring of the Spirit was not wholly without those more extraordinary effects on persons' bodies. The jailer in particular, seems to have been an instance of that nature, when he, in the utmost distress and amazement, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. His falling down at that time does not seem to be a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication, or humble address to Paul and Silas; for he seems not to have said anything to them then; but he first brought them out, and then he says to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts xvi. 29, and 30. But his falling down seems to be from the same cause as his trembling. The psalmist gives an account of his crying out aloud, and a great weakening of his body under convictions of conscience, and a sense of the guilt of sin, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was

heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."--We may at least argue so much from it, that such an effect of conviction of sin may well in some cases be supposed; for if we should suppose any thing of an *auxesis* in the expressions, yet the psalmist would not represent his case by what would be absurd, and to which no degree of that exercise of mind he spoke of, would have any tendency.--We read of the disciples, Matt. xiv. 26. that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, threatening their destruction in that storm, "they cried out for fear." Why then should it be thought strange, that persons should cry out for fear, when God appears to them, as a terrible enemy, and they see themselves in great danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of eternal misery? The spouse, once and again, speaks of herself as overpowered with the love of Christ, so as to weaken her body, and make her faint. Cant. ii. 5. "Stay my with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." And chap. v. 8. "I charge you, () ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." From whence we may at least argue, that such an effect may well be supposed to arise, from such a cause in the saints in some cases, and that such an effect will sometimes be seen in the church of Christ.

It is a weak objection, that the impressions of enthusiasts have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble, is no argument that Saul, afterwards Paul, and the jailer, did not tremble from real convictions of conscience. Indeed all such objections from effects on the body, let them be greater or less, seem to be exceeding frivolous; they who argue thence, proceed in the dark, they know not what ground they go upon, nor by what rule they judge. The root and course of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections are to be inquired into, and examined by the rule of God's word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

III. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of people is not the work of the Spirit of God, that it occasions a great deal of noise about religion.

For though true religion be of a contrary nature to that of the Pharisees--which was ostentatious, and delighted to set itself forth to the view of

men for their applause--yet such is human nature, that it is morally impossible there should be a great concern, strong affection, and a general engagedness of mind amongst a people, without causing a notable, visible, and open commotion and alteration amongst that people.--Surely, it is no argument that the minds of persons are not under the influence of God's Spirit, that they are very much moved: for indeed spiritual and eternal things are so great, and of such infinite concern, that there is a great absurdity in men's being but moderately moved and affected by them; and surely it is no argument that they are not moved by the Spirit of God, that they are affected with these things in some measure as they deserve, or in some proportion to their importance. And when was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

Indeed Christ says, Luke xvii. 20. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." That is, it will not consist in what is outward and visible; it shall not be like earthly kingdoms, set up with outward pomp, in some particular place, which shall be especially the royal city, and seat of the kingdom; as Christ explains himself in the words next following, "Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Not that the kingdom of God shall be set up in the world, on the ruin of Satan's kingdom, without a very observable, great effect: a mighty change in the state of things, to the observation and astonishment of the whole world: for such an effect as this is even held forth in the prophecies of Scripture, and is so by Christ himself, in this very place, and even in his own explanation of these forementioned words, ver. 24. "For as the lightning that lightneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto another part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." This is to distinguish Christ's coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false Christs, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers; whereas this event of setting up the kingdom of God, should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world with clear manifestation, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one's eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other. And we find, that when Christ's kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit in the apostles' days, it occasioned a great stir

every where. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit! And so in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places! The affair filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the apostles, that they had turned the world upside down. Acts xvii. 6.

IV. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people, is not the work of the Spirit of God, that many who are the subjects of it, have great impressions made on their imaginations.

That persons have many impressions on their imaginations, does not prove that they have nothing else. It is easy to be accounted for, that there should be much of this nature amongst a people, where a great multitude of all kinds of constitutions have their minds engaged with intense thought and strong affections about invisible things; yea, it would be strange if there should not. Such is our nature, that we cannot think of things invisible, without a degree of imagination. I dare appeal to any man, of the greatest powers of mind, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on God, or Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations? And the more engaged the mind is, and the more intense the contemplation and affection, still the more lively and strong the imaginary idea will ordinarily be; especially when attended with surprise. And this is the case when the mental prospect is very new, and takes strong hold of the passions, as fear or joy; and when the change of the state and views of the mind is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely ravishing and delightful. And it is no wonder that many persons do not well distinguish between that which is imaginary and that which is intellectual and spiritual; and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding and of distinguishing capacity.

As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and so made us that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty; so, it appears to me, that such is our state and nature, that this faculty is really subservient and helpful to the other

faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it; though oftentimes, when the imagination is too strong, and the other faculties weak, it overbears, and disturbs them in their exercise. It appears to me manifest, in many instances with which I have been acquainted, that God has really made use of this faculty to truly divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant. God seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deal with them as babes; as of old he instructed his church, whilst in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a position. Let others who have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns, judge whether experience does not confirm it.

It is no argument that a work is not of the Spirit of God, that some who are the subjects of it have been in a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven, and there saw glorious sights. I have been acquainted with some such instances, and I see no need of bringing in the help of the devil into the account that we give of these things, nor yet of supposing them to be of the same nature with the visions of the prophets, or St. Paul's rapture into paradise. Human nature, under these intense exercises and affections, is all that need be brought into the account. If it may be well accounted for, that persons under a true sense of the glorious and wonderful greatness and excellency of divine things, and soul-ravishing views of the beauty and love of Christ, should have the strength of nature overpowered, as I have already shown that it may; then I think it is not at all strange, that amongst great numbers that are thus affected and overborne, there should be some persons of particular constitutions that should have their imaginations thus affected. The effect is no other than what bears a proportion and analogy to other effects of the strong exercise of their minds. It is no wonder, when the thoughts are so fixed, and the affections so strong--and the whole soul so engaged, ravished, and swallowed up--that all other parts of the body are so affected, as to be deprived of their strength, and the whole frame ready to dissolve. Is it any wonder that, in such a case, the brain in particular,(especially in some constitutions,) which we know is most especially affected by intense contemplations and exercises of

mind, should be so affected, that its strength and spirits should for a season be diverted, and taken off from impressions made on the organs of external sense, and be wholly employed in a train of pleasing delightful imaginations, corresponding with the present frame of the mind. Some are ready to interpret such things wrong, and to lay too much weight on them, as prophetical visions, divine revelations and sometimes significations from heaven of what shall come to pass; which the issue, in some instances I have known, has shown to be otherwise. But yet, it appears to me that such things are evidently sometimes from the Spirit of God, though indirectly; that is, their extraordinary frame of mind, and that strong and lively sense of divine things which is the occasion of them, is from his Spirit; and also as the mind continues in its holy frame, and retains a divine sense of the excellency of spiritual things even in its rapture; which holy frame and sense is from the Spirit of God, though the imaginations that attend it are but accidental, and therefore there is commonly something or other in them that is confused, improper, and false.

V. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that example is a great means of it.

It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God, that means are used in producing it; for we know that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world, and it is no more an argument against the divinity of an effect, that this means is made use of, than if it was by any other means. It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by one another's good example. The Scripture directs us to set good examples to that end, Matt. v. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1. 1 Tim. iv. 12. Titus ii. 7. and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples of others, and to follow them, 2 Cor. viii. 1-7. Heb. vi. 12. Phil. iii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 16. and chap. xi. 1. 2 Thess. iii. 9. 1 Thess. i. 7. By which it appears, that example is one of God's means; and certainly it is no argument that a work is not of God, that his own means are made use of to effect it.

And as it is a *scriptural* way of carrying on God's work, by example, so it is a *reasonable* way. It is no argument that men are not influenced by reason, that they are influenced by example. This way of persons holding

forth truth to one another, has a tendency to enlighten the mind, and to convince reason. None will deny but that for persons to signify things one to another by words, may rationally be supposed to tend to enlighten each other's minds; but the same thing may be signified by actions, and signified much more fully and effectually. Words are of no use any otherwise than as they convey our own ideas to others; but actions, in some cases, may do it much more fully. There is a language in actions; and in some cases, much more clear and convincing that in words. It is therefore no argument against the goodness of the effect, that persons are greatly affected by seeing other so; yea, though the impression be made only be seeing the tokens of great and extraordinary affection in others in their behaviour, taking for granted what they are affected with, without hearing them say one word. There may be language sufficient in such a case in their behaviour only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them their sense of things more than can possibly be done by words only. If a person should see another under extreme bodily torment, he might receive much clearer ideas, and more convincing evidence of what he suffered by his actions in his misery, than he could do only by the words of an unaffected indifferent relater. In like manner he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is excellent and very delightful, from the behaviour of one that is in actual enjoyment, than by the dull narration of one which is inexperienced and insensible himself. I desire that this matter may be examined by the strictest reason.--Is it not manifest, that effects produced in persons' minds are rational, since not only weak and ignorant people are much influenced by example, but also those that make the greatest boast of strength of reason, are more influenced by reason held forth in this way, than almost any other way. Indeed the religious affections of many when raised by this means, as by hearing the word preached, or any other means, may prove flashy, and soon vanish, as Christ represents the stony-ground hearers; but the affections of some thus moved by example, are abiding, and prove to be of saving issue.

There never yet was a time of remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand. So it was at the reformation, and in the apostles' days, in Jerusalem and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world, as will be most manifest to any one

that attends to the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles. As in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another, 1 Thess. i. 7,8. “So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.”

It is no valid objection against examples being so much used, that the Scripture speaks of the word as the principal means of carrying on God’s work; for the word of God is the principal means, nevertheless, by which other means operate and are made effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual; for all that is visible to the eye is unintelligible and vain, without the word of God to instruct and guide the mind. It is the word of God that is indeed held forth and applied by example, as the word of the Lord sounded forth to other towns in Macedonia, and Achaia, by the example of those that believe in Thessalonica.

That example should be a great means of propagating the church of God seems to be several ways signified in Scripture: it is signified by Ruth’s following Naomi out of the land of Moab, into the land of Israel, when she resolved that she would not leave her, but would go whither she went, and would lodge where she lodged; and that Namomi’s people should be her people, and Namomi’s God, her God. Ruth, who was the ancestral mother of David, and of Christ was undoubtedly a great type of the church; upon which account her history is inserted in the canon of Scripture. In her leaving the land of Moab and its gods, to come and put her trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel, we have a type of the conversion not only of the Gentile church but of every sinner, that is naturally an alien and stranger, but in his conversion forgets his own people, and fathers house, and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints and a true Israelite. The same seems to be signified in the effect the example of the spouse, when she was sick of love, has on the daughters of Jerusalem, *i.e.* visible Christians, who are first awakened, by seeing the spouse in such extraordinary circumstances, and then converted. See Cant. v. 8, 9. and vi. 1. And this is undoubtedly one way that “the Spirit and the bride say, come.” Rev. xxii. 17. *i.e.* the Spirit in the bride. It is

foretold, that the work of God should be very much carried on by this means, in the last great outpouring of the Spirit, that should introduce the glorious day of the church, so often spoken of in Scripture, Zech. viii. 21-23. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people, and strong nations, shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

VI. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that many, who seem to be the subjects of it, are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct.

We are to consider that the end for which God pours out his Spirit, is to make men holy, and not to make them politicians. Is it no wonder that, in a mixed multitude of all sorts--wise and unwise, young and old, of weak and strong natural abilities, under strong impressions of mind--there are many who behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature; to do so requires a great deal of discretion, strength, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rules of God's holy word. That it should be thus may be well accounted for from the exceeding weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption of those that are yet the subjects of the saving influences of God's Spirit, and have a real zeal for God.

We have a remarkable instance, in the New Testament, of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the Spirit in the apostles' days, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and great irregularities; *viz.* the church at Corinth. There is scarcely any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary influences, in

convincing and converting sinners, and also in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; yet what manifold imprudences, great and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion did they run into, at the Lord's supper, and in the exercise of church discipline! To which may be added, their indecent manner of attending other parts of public worship, their jarring and contention about their teachers, and even the exercise of their extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues, and the like, wherein they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God.

And if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities, in some who are great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The apostle Peter himself, who was a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle--and one of the chief instruments of setting up the christian church in the world--when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the apostle Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 11-13. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." If a great pillar of the christian church--one of the chief of those who are the very foundations on which, next to Christ, the whole church is said to be built--was guilty of such an irregularity; is it any wonder if other lesser instruments, who have not that extraordinary conduct of the divine Spirit he had, should be guilty of many irregularities?

And in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not of God, if many who are either the subjects or the instrument of it, are guilty of too great forwardness to censure others as unconverted. For this may be through mistakes they have embraced concerning the marks by which they are to judge of the hypocrisy and carnality of others; or from not duly apprehending the latitude the Spirit of God uses in the methods of his operations; or, from want of making due allowance for that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of the saints; as well as through want of a due sense of their own blindness and weakness, and remaining

corruption, whereby spiritual pride may have a secret vent this way, under some disguise, and not be discovered.--If we allow that truly pious men may have a great deal of remaining blindness and corruption, and may be liable to mistakes about the marks of hypocrisy, as undoubtedly all will allow, then it is not unaccountable that they should sometimes run into such errors as these. It is as easy, and upon some accounts more easy to be accounted for, why the remaining corruption of good men should sometimes have an unobserved vent this way, than most other ways; and without doubt(however lamentable) many holy men have erred in this way.

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal an excellent grace; yet above all other christian virtues, this needs to be strictly watched and searched; for it is that with which corruption, and particularly pride and human passion, is exceedingly apt to mix unobserved. And it is observable, that there never was a time of great reformation, to cause a revival of zeal in the church of God, but that it has been attended, in some notable instances, with irregularity, and a running out some way or other into an undue severity. Thus in the apostles' days, a great deal of zeal was spent about unclean meats, with heat of spirit in Christians one against another, both parties condemning and censuring one another, as not true Christians; when the apostle had charity for both, as influenced by a spirit of real piety: "he that eats," says he, "to the Lord he eats, and giveth God thanks; and he that eatheth not, to the Lord he eatheth not, and giveth God thanks." So in the church of Corinth, they had got into a way of extolling some ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up one against another: but yet these things were no sign that the work then so wonderfully carried on, was not the work of God. And after this, when religion was sill greatly flourishing in the world, and a spirit of eminent holiness and zeal prevailed in the christian church, the zeal of Christians ran out into a very improper and undue severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. In some cases they would by no means admit them into their charity and communion though they appeared never so humble and penitent. And in the days of Constantine the Great, the zeal of Christians against heathenism ran out into a degree of persecution. So in that glorious revival of religion, at the reformation, zeal in many instances appeared in a very improper severity, and even a

degree of persecution; yea, in some of the most eminent reformers; as in the great Calvin in particular. And many in those days of the flourishing of vital religion, were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from then in opinion in some points of divinity.

VII. Nor are many errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work, any argument that the work in general is not of the Spirit of God.

However great a spiritual influence may be, it is not to be expected that the Spirit of God should be given now in the same manner as to the apostles, infallibly to guide them in points of christian doctrine, so that what they taught might be relied on as a rule to the christian church. And if many delusions of Satan appear, at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, it is not an argument that the work in general is not the work of God, any more than it was an argument in Egypt, that there were no true miracles wrought there, by the hand of God, because Jannes and Jambres wrought false miracles at the same time by the hand of the devil. Yea, the same persons may be the subjects of much of the influences of the Spirit of God, and yet in some things be led away by the delusions of Satan, and this be no more of paradox than many other things that are true of real saints, in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption, and the new man and the old man subsist together in the same person; and the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil remain for a while together in the same heart. Many godly persons have undoubtedly in this and other ages, exposed themselves to woeful delusions, by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God, to signify something future, or to direct them where to go, and what to do.

VIII. If some, who were thought to be wrought upon, fall away into gross errors, or scandalous practices, it is no argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God.

That there are some counterfeits, is no argument that nothing is true: such things are always expected in a time of reformation. If we look into church history, we shall find no instance of any great revival of religion, but what has been attended with many such things. Instances of this

nature in the apostles' days were innumerable; some fell away into gross heresies, others into vile practices, though they seemed to be the subjects of a work of the Spirit--and were accepted for a while amongst those that were truly so, as their brethren and companions--and were not suspected till they went out from them. And some of these were teachers and officers--and eminent persons in the christian church--whom God had endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; as appears by the beginning of the 6th chapter of the Hebrews. An instance of these was Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles, and had long been constantly united to, and intimately conversant with, a company of truly experienced disciples, without being discovered or suspected, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice. He had been treated by Jesus himself, in all external things, as if he had truly been a disciple, even investing him with the character of apostle, sending him forth to preach the gospel, and enduing him with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For though Christ knew him, yet he did not then clothe himself with the character of omniscient Judge, and searcher of hearts, but acted the part of a minister of the visible church; (for he was his Father's minister;) and therefore rejected him not, till he had discovered himself by his scandalous practice; thereby giving an example to guides and rulers of the visible church, not to take it upon them to act the part of searcher of hearts, but to be influenced in their administrations by what is visible and open.--There were some instances then of such apostates, as were esteemed eminently full of the grace of God's Spirit. An instance of this nature probably was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, who was looked upon by the Christians in Jerusalem, in the time of that extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen out of the multitude of Christians to that office, for that reason; as you may see in Acts vi. 3, 5. Yet he afterwards fell away and became the head of a sect of vile heretics, of gross practices, called from his name the sect of the Nicolaitans, Rev. ii. 6, and 15.

So in the time of the reformation from popery, how great was the number of those who for a while seemed to join with the reformers, yet fell away into the grossest and most absurd errors, and abominable practices. And it is particularly observable, that in times of great pouring out of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those who for a while

seemed to partake in it, have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, and gross enthusiasm, boasting of high degrees of spirituality and perfection, censuring and condemning others as carnal. Thus it was with the Gnostics in the apostles' times; and thus it was with several sects at the reformation, as Anthony Burgess observes in his book called Spiritual Refinings, Part I. Serm. 23. P. 132. "The first worthy reformers, and glorious instruments of God, found a bitter conflict herein, so that they were exercised not only with formalists, and traditionary papists on the one side, but men that pretended themselves to be more enlightened than the reformers were, on the other side: hence they called those that did adhere to the Scripture, and would try revelations by it, Literists and Vowelists, as men acquainted with the words and vowels of the Scripture, having nothing of the Spirit of God: and wheresoever in any town the true doctrine of the gospel brake forth to the displacing of popery, presently such opinions arose, like tares that came up among the good wheat; whereby great divisions were raised, and the reformation made abominable and odious to the world; as if that had been the sun to give heat and warmth to those worms and serpents to crawl out of the ground. Hence they inveighed against Luther, and said he had only promulgated a carnal gospel."--Some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts had been for a while highly esteemed by the first reformers, and peculiarly dear to them.--Thus also in England, at the time when vital religion much prevailed in the days of King Charles I, the interregnum, and Oliver Cromwell, such things as these abounded. And so in New England, in her purest days, when vital piety flourished, such kind of things as these broke out. Therefore the devil's sowing such tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.

IX. It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness.

If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger--and into which the greater part of men in christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so

for want of taking due care to avoid it--then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possibly I can of the dreadfulness of it. If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness, who does most to represent to me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.

I appeal to every one, whether this is not the very course they would take in case of exposedness to any great temporal calamity? If any of you who are heads of families saw one of your children in a house all on fire, and in imminent danger of being soon consumed in the flames, yet seemed to be very insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape after you had often called to it--would you go on to speak to it only in a cold and indifferent manner? Would not you cry aloud, and call earnestly to it, and represent the danger it was in, and its own folly in delaying, in the most lively manner of which you was capable? If you should continue to speak to it only in a cold manner, as you are wont to do in ordinary conversation about indifferent matters, would not those about you begin to think you were bereft of reason yourself? This is not the way of mankind in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, and about which they are greatly concerned. They are not wont to speak to other of their danger, and warn them but a little or in a cold and indifferent manner. Nature teaches men otherwise. If we who have the care of souls, knew what hell was, had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means had become sensible how dreadful their case was--and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers not sensible of their danger--it would be morally impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery, and their great exposedness to it, and even to cry aloud to them.

When ministers preach of hell, and warn sinners to avoid it, in a cold manner--though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible--they contradict themselves. For actions, as I observed before, have a language as well as words. If a preacher's words represent the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, while his behaviour and manner of speaking

contradict it--showing that the preacher does not think so--he defeats his own purpose; for the language of his actions, in such a case, is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words. Not that I think that the law only should be preached: ministers may preach other things too little. The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel, and in order that it may be preached more effectually. The main work of ministers is to preach the gospel: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.” So that a minister would miss it very much if he should insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his Lord, and neglect to preach the gospel; but yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.

And certainly such earnestness and affection in speaking is beautiful, as becomes the nature and importance of the subject. Not but that there may be such a thing as an indecent boisterousness in a preacher, something besides what naturally arises from the nature of his subject, and in which the matter and manner do not well agree together. Some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to fright persons to heaven; but I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell. They stand upon its brink, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. Is it not a reasonable thing to fright a person out of a house on fire? The word *fright* is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, for which there is good reason, is not to be spoken against under any such name.

SECT. II

What are distinguishing scripture evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

HAVING shown, in some instances, what are not evidences that a work wrought among a people, is not a work of the Spirit of God, I now proceed, in the second place, as was proposed, to show positively, what are the sure, distinguishing scripture evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see among a people, without danger of being misled.--And in this, as I said before, I shall confine myself wholly to

those marks which are given us by the apostle in the chapter wherein is my text, where this matter is particularly handled, and more plainly and fully than any where else in the Bible. And in speaking to these marks, I shall take them in the order in which I find them in the chapter.

I. When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God.

This sign the apostle gives us in the 2d and 3d verses, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; and every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." This implies a confessing not only that there was such a person who appeared in Palestine, and did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that he was Christ, *i.e.* the Son of God, anointed to be Lord and Saviour, as the name Jesus Christ implies. That thus much is implied in the apostle's meaning, is confirmed by the 15th verse, where the apostle is still on the same subject of signs of the true Spirit; "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And it is to be observed that the word *confess*, as it is often used in the New Testament, signifies more then merely *allowing*: it implies an establishing and confirming of a thing by testimony, and declaring it with manifestation of esteem and affection; so Matt. x. 32. "Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I *confess* also before my Father which is in heaven." Rom. xv. 9. "I will *confess* to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." And Phil. ii. 11. "That every tongue shall *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And that this is the force of the expression, as the apostle John uses it in the place, is confirmed in the next chapter, ver. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." And by that parallel place of the apostle Paul, where we have the same rule given to distinguish the true Spirit from all counterfeits, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the

Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; (or will show an ill or mean esteem of him;) and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

So that if the spirit that is at work among a people is plainly observed to work so as to convince them of Christ, and lead them to him--to confirm their minds in the belief of the history of Christ as he appeared in the flesh--and that he is the Son of God, and was sent of God to save sinners; that he is the only Saviour, and that they stand in great need of him; and if he seems to beget in them higher and more honourable thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their affections more to him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit; however incapable we may be to determine, whether that conviction and affection be in that manner, or to that degree, as to be saving or not.

But the words of the apostle are remarkable; the person to whom the Spirit gives testimony, and for whom he raises their esteem, must be that Jesus who appeared in the flesh, and not another Christ in his stead; nor any mystical fantastical Christ; such as the light within. This the spirit of Quakers extols, while it diminishes their esteem of and dependence upon an outward Christ--or Jesus as he came in the flesh--and leads them off from him; but the spirit that gives testimony for that Jesus, and leads to him, can be no other than the Spirit of God.

The devil has the most bitter and implacable enmity against that person, especially in his character of the Saviour of men; he mortally hates the story and doctrine of his redemption; he never would go about to beget in men more honourable thoughts of him, and lay greater weight on his instructions and commands. The Spirit that inclines men's hearts to the seed of the woman, is not the spirit of the serpent that has such an irreconcileable enmity against him. He that heightens men's esteem of the glorious Michael, that prince of angels, is not the spirit of the dragon that is at war with him.

II. When the spirit that is at work operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, and cherishing men's worldly lusts; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false spirit.

This sign we have given us in the 4th and 5th verses. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” Here is a plain antithesis: it is evident that the apostle is still comparing those that are influenced by the two opposite kinds of spirits, the true and the false, and showing the difference; the one is of God, and overcomes the spirit of the world; the other is of the world, and speaks and savours of the things of the world. The spirit of the devil is here called, “he that is in the world.” Christ says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But it is otherwise with Satan’s kingdom; he is “the god of this world.”

What the apostle means by *the world*, or “the things that are of the world,” we learn by his own words, in the 2d chapter of this epistle, 15th and 16th verses. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” So that by the world the apostle evidently means every thing that appertains to the interest of sin, and comprehends all the corruptions and lusts of men, and all those acts and objects by which they are gratified.

So that we may safely determine, from what the apostle says, that the spirit that is at work amongst a people, after such a manner, as to lessen men’s esteem of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and to take off their hearts from an eager pursuit after these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about a future state and eternal happiness which the gospel reveals--and puts them upon earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and the spirit that convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, the guilt it brings, and the misery to which it exposes; must needs be the Spirit of God.

It is not to be supposed that Satan would convince men of sin, and awaken the conscience; it can no way serve his end, to make that candle of the Lord shine the brighter, and to open the mouth of that vicegerent of God in the soul. It is for his interest, whatever he does, to lull conscience asleep, and keep it quiet. To have that, with its eyes and mouth open in the soul, will tend to clog and hinder all his designs of

darkness, and evermore to disturb his affairs, to cross his interest, and disquiet him, so that he can manage nothing to his mind without molestation. Would the devil, when he is about to establish men in sin, take such a course, in the first place, to enlighten and awaken the conscience to see the dreadfulness of sin, and make them exceedingly afraid of it, and sensible of their misery by reason of their past sins, and their great need of deliverance from their guilt? Would he make them more careful, inquisitive, and watchful to discern what is sinful; and to avoid future sins; and so more afraid of the devil's temptations, and more careful to guard against them? What do those men do with their reason, that suppose that the Spirit that operates thus, is the spirit of the devil?

Possibly some may say, that the devil may even awaken men's consciences to deceive them, and make them think they have been the subjects of a saving work of the Spirit of God, while they are indeed still in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied, that the man who has an awakened conscience, is the least likely to be deceived of any man in the world; it is the drowsy, insensible, stupid conscience that is most easily blinded. The more sensible conscience is in a diseased soul, the less easily is it quieted without a real healing. The more sensible conscience is made of the dreadfulness of sin, and of the greatness of a man's own guilt, the less likely is he to rest in his own righteousness, or to be pacified with nothing but shadows. A man that has been thoroughly terrified with a sense of his own danger and misery, is not easily flattered and made to believe himself safe, without any good grounds. To awaken conscience, and convince it of the evil of sin, cannot tend to establish it, but certainly tends to make way for sin and Satan's being cut out. Therefore this is a good argument that the Spirit that operates thus, cannot be the spirit of the devil; except we suppose that Christ knew not how to argue, who told the Pharisees--who supposed that the Spirit by which he wrought, was the spirit of the devil--*that Satan would not cast out Satan*, Matt. xii. 25, 26.--And therefore, if we see persons made sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, and of the displeasure of God against it; of their own miserable condition as they are in themselves, by reason of sin, and earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation--and sensible of their need of God's pity and help, and engaged to seek it in the use of the means that God has appointed--we may certainly conclude that it is from the Spirit of

God, whatever effects this concern has on their bodies; though it cause them to cry out aloud, or to shriek, or to faint; or, though it throw them into convulsions, or whatever other way the blood and spirits are moved.

The influence of the Spirit of God is yet more abundantly manifest, if persons have their hearts *drawn off* from the world, and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts, and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellency of divine things, and the affection they have to those spiritual enjoyments of another world, that are promised in the gospel.

III. The spirit that operates in such a manner, as to cause in men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity, is certainly the Spirit of God.

This rule the apostle gives us in the 6th verse: "We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." *We are of God*; that is, "We the apostles are sent forth of God, and appointed by him to teach the world, and to deliver those doctrines and instructions, which are to be their rule; *he that knoweth God, heareth us*," &c.--The apostle's argument here equally reaches all that in the same sense are *of God;* that is, all thos that God has appointed and inspired to deliver to his church its rule of faith and practice; all the prophets and apostles, whose doctrine God has made the foundation on which he has built his church, as in Eph. ii. 20. in a word, all the penmen of the Holy Scriptures. The devil never would attempt to beget in persons a regard to that divine word which God has given to be the great and standing rule for the direction of his church in all religious matters, and all concerns of their souls, in all ages. A spirit of delusion will not incline persons to seek direction at the mouth of God. To the law and to the testimony, is never the cry of those evil spirits that have no light in them; for it is God's own direction to discover their delusions. Isa. viii. 19, 20. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The devil does not say the

same as Abraham did, “They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them:” nor the same that the voice from heaven did concerning Christ, “Hear ye him.” Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive men, beget in them a high opinion of the infallible rule, and incline them to think much of it, and be very conversant with it? Would the prince of darkness, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, lead men to the sun? The devil has ever shown a mortal spite and hatred towards that holy book the Bible: he has done all in his power to extinguish that light; and to draw men off from it: he knows it to be that light by which his kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown. He has had for many ages experience of its power to defeat his purposes, and baffle his designs: it is his constant plague. It is the main weapon which Michael uses in his war with him: it is the sword of the Spirit, that pierces him and conquers him. It is that great and strong sword, with which God punishes Leviathan, that crooked serpent. It is that sharp sword that we read of, Rev. xix. 15. That proceeds out of the mouth of him that sat on the horse, with which he smites his enemies. Every text is a dart to torment the old serpent. He has felt the stinging smart thousands of times; therefore he is engaged against the Bible, and hates every word in it: and we may be sure that he never will attempt to raise persons’ esteem of it, or affection to it. And accordingly we see it common in enthusiasts, that they depreciate this written rule, and set up the light within or some other rule above it.

IV. Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those compellations given to the opposite spirits, in the last words of the 6th verse, “The spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

These words exhibit the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God, and other spirits that counterfeit his operations. And therefore, if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that it operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit. For instance, if we observe that the spirit at work makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a God, and that he is a great and sin-hating God; that life is short, and very uncertain; and that there is another world; that they have immortal souls, and must give account of themselves to God, that they

are exceeding sinful by nature and practice; that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to some sound doctrine; the spirit that works thus operates as a spirit of truth; he represents things as they truly are. He brings men to the light; for whatever makes truth manifest is light; as the apostle Paul observes, Eph. v. 13. "But all things that are reproved (or discovered, as it is in the margin) are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And therefore we may conclude, that it is not the spirit of darkness that doth thus discover and make manifest the truth. Christ tells us that Satan is a liar, and the father of lies; and his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. It is upheld and promoted only by darkness and error. Satan has all his power of dominion by darkness. Hence we read of the power of darkness. Luke xxii. 53. And Col. i. 13. And devils are called "the rulers of the darkness of this world." Whatever spirit removes our darkness, and brings us to the light, undeceives us, and, by convincing us of the truth, doth us a kindness. If I am brought to a sight of truth, and am made sensible of things as they really are, my duty is immediately to thank God for it, without standing first to inquire by what means I have such a benefit.

V. If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God.

This sign the apostle insists upon from the 6th verse to the end of the chapter. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," &c. Here it is evident, that the apostle is still comparing those two sorts of persons that are influenced by the opposite kinds of spirits; and mentions love as a mark by which we may know who has the true spirit: but this is especially evident by the 12th and 13th verses. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." In these verses love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the Holy Spirit consisted; or, as if *divine love* dwelling in us, and the *Spirit of God* dwelling in us, were the same thing; as it is also in the last two verses of the foregoing chapter,

and in the 16th verse of this chapter. Therefore this last mark which the apostle gives of the true Spirit he seems to speak of as the most eminent: and so insists much more largely upon it, than upon all the rest; and speaks expressly of both love to God and men; of *love to men* in the 7th, 11th, and 12th verses; and of *love to God*, in the 17th, 18th, and 19th verses; and of both together, in the last two verses; and of love to men, as arising from love to God, in these last two verses.

Therefore, when the spirit that is at work amongst the people, tends this way, and brings many of them to high and exalting thoughts of the Divine Being, and his glorious perfections; and works in them an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with those motives and incitements to love, of which the apostle speaks in that passage of Scripture we are upon, *viz.* the wonderful, free love of God in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him, but were his enemies; must needs be the Spirit of God, as ver. 9, 10. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And ver. 16. “And we have known, and believed, the love that God hath to us.” And ver. 19. “We love him because he first loved us.” The spirit that excites to love on these motives, and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the gospel, and manifested in Christ, delightful objects of contemplation; and makes the soul to long after God and Christ--after their presence and communion, acquaintance with them, and conformity to them--and to live so as to please and honour them; the spirit that quells contentions among men, and gives a spirit of peace and good will, excites to acts of outward kindness, and earnest desires of the salvation of souls--and causes a delight in those that appear as the children God, and followers of Christ; I say, when a spirit operates after this manner among a people, there is the highest kind of evidence of the influence of a true and divine spirit.

Indeed there is a counterfeit love, that often appears among those who

are led by a spirit of delusion. There is commonly in the wildest enthusiasts, a kind of union and affection, arising from self-love, occasioned by their agreeing in those things wherein they greatly differ from all others, and from which they are objects of the ridicule of all the rest of mankind. This naturally will cause them so much the more to prize those peculiarities that make them the objects of others' contempt. Thus the ancient Gnostics, and the wild fanatics that appeared at the beginning of the reformation, boasted of their great love one to another; one sect of them, in particular, calling themselves the *family of love*. But this is quite another thing, than that christian love I have just described: it is only the working of a natural self-love, and no true benevolence, any more that the union and friendship which may be among a company of pirates, that are at war with all the rest of the world. There is enough said in this passage of the nature of a truly christian love, thoroughly to distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is love that arises from apprehension of the wonderful riches of the free grace and sovereignty of God's love to us, in Christ Jesus; being attended with a sense of our own utter unworthiness, as in ourselves the enemies and haters of God and Christ, and with a renunciation of all our own excellency and righteousness. See ver. 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest character of true divine supernatural love--distinguishing it from counterfeits that arise from a natural self-love--is, that the christian virtue of *humility* shines in it; that which above all others renounces, abases, and annihilates what we term *self*. Christian love, or true charity, is an humble love. 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked." When therefore we see love in persons attended with a sense of their own littleness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency; and so with self-diffidence, self-emptiness, self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit; these are the manifest tokens of the Spirit of God. He that thus dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. What the apostle speaks of as a great evidence of the true Spirit, is God's love or Christ's love; as ver. 12.--"his love is perfected in us." What kind of love that is, we may see best in what appeared in Christ's example. The love that appeared in that Lamb of God, was not only a love to friends, but to enemies, and a love attended with a meek and humble spirit. "Learn of me," says he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart."--Love and humility are two things the most contrary to the spirit of the devil, of any

thing in the world; for the character of that evil spirit, above all things, consists in pride and malice.

Thus I have spoken particularly to the several marks the apostle gives us of a work of the true Spirit. There are some of these things which the devil *would not* do if he could: thus he would not awaken the conscience, and make men sensible of their miserable state by reason of sin, and sensible of their great need of a Saviour; and he would not confirm men in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners, or raise men's value and esteem of him: he would not beget in men's minds an opinion of the necessity, usefulness, and truth of the Holy Scriptures, or incline them to make much use of them; nor would he show men the truth, in things that concern their souls' interest; to undeceive them, and lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they really are. And there are other things that the devil *neither can nor will* do; he will not give men a spirit of divine love, or christian humility and poverty of spirit; nor *could* he if he would. He cannot give those things he has not himself: these things are as contrary as possible to his nature. And therefore when there is an extraordinary influence or operation appearing on the minds of a people, if these things are found in it, we are safe in determining that it is the work of God, whatever other circumstances it may be attended with, whatever instruments are used, whatever methods are taken to promote it; whatever means a sovereign God, whose judgments are a great deep, employs to carry it on; and whatever motion there may be of the animal spirits, whatever effects may be wrought on men's bodies. These marks, that the apostle has given us, are sufficient to stand alone, and support themselves. They plainly show *the finger of God*, and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such little objections, as many make from oddities, irregularities, errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some professors.

But here some may *object* to the sufficiency of the marks given, what the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

To which I *answer*, that this can be no objection against the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true from the false spirit, in those false

apostles and prophets, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light, because it is principally with a view to them that the apostle gives these marks; as appears by the words of the text, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God;” and this is the reason he gives, because many false prophets are gone out into the world: *viz.* “There are many gone out into the world who are the ministers of the devil, who transform themselves into the prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the devil is transformed into an angel of light; therefore try the spirits by these rules that I shall give you, that you may be able to distinguish the true spirit from the false, under such a crafty disguise.” Those *false prophets* the apostle *John* speaks of, are doubtless the same sort of men with those *false apostles*, and deceitful workers, that the apostle *Paul* speaks of, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light: and therefore we may be sure that these marks are especially adapted to distinguish between the true Spirit, and the devil transformed into an angel of light, because they are given especially for that end; that is the apostle’s declared purpose and design, to give marks by which the true Spirit may be distinguished from that sort of counterfeits.

And if we look over what is said about these false prophets, and false apostles, (as there is much said about them in the New Testament,) and take notice in what manner the devil was transformed into an angel of light in them, we shall not find any thing that in the least injures the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true Spirit from such counterfeits. The devil transformed himself into an angel of light, as there was in them a show, and great boast, of extraordinary knowledge in divine things; Col. ii. 8. 1. Tim. i. 6,7. and chap. vi..3--5. 2 Tim. ii. 14-18. Tit. i. 10, 16. Hence their followers called themselves *Gnostics*, from their great pretended knowledge: and the devil in them mimicked the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, in visions, revelations, prophecies, miracles, &c. Hence they are called false apostles, and false prophets: see Matt. xxiv. 24. Again, there was a false show of, and lying pretensions to, great holiness and devotion in words: Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Ephes. iv. 14. Hence they are called deceitful workers, and wells and clouds without water. 2 Cor. xi. 13. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 12. There was also in them a show of extraordinary piety and righteousness in their superstitious worship: Col. ii. 16-23. So they had a false, proud, and bitter zeal: Gal. iv. 17, 18. 1 Tim.

i. 6. and chap. vi. 4, 5. And likewise a false show of humility, in affecting an extraordinary outward meanness and dejection, when indeed they were "vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind:" and made a righteousness of their humility, and were exceedingly lifted up with their eminent piety: Col. ii. 18, 23. But how do such things as these in the least injure those things that have been mentioned as the distinguishing evidences of the true Spirit?--Besides such vain shows which may be from the devil, there are common influences of the Spirit, which are often mistaken for saving grace; but these are out of the question, because though they are not saving, yet are the work of the true Spirit.

Having thus fulfilled what I at first proposed, in considering what are the certain, distinguishing marks, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any work that falls under our observation, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or no; I now proceed to the APPLICATION.

SECT. III.

Practical inferences.

I. From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, *viz. That the extraordinary influence that has lately appeared, causing an uncommon concern and engagedness of mind about the things of religion, is undoubtedly, in the general, from the Spirit of God.*

There are but two things that need to be known in order to such a work's being judged of, *viz. Facts* and *rules*. The *rules* of the word of God we have had laid before us; and as to *facts,* there are but two ways that we can come at them, so as to be in a capacity to compare them with the rules, either by our own observation, or by information from others who have had opportunity to observe them.

As to this work, there are many things concerning it that are notorious, and which, unless the apostle John was out in his rules, are sufficient to determine it to be in general the work of God. The Spirit that is at work, takes off persons' minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, and puts them upon earnestly

seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state as they are by nature. It awakens men's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a great desire and earnest care and endeavour to obtain his favour. It puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which God has appointed; accompanied with a greater regard to the word of God, a desire of hearing and reading it, and of being more conversant with it than they used to be. And it is notoriously manifest, that the spirit that is at work, in general, operates as a spirit of truth, making persons more sensible of what is really true in those things that concern their eternal salvation: as, that they must die, and that life is very short and uncertain; that there is a great sin-hating God, to whom they are accountable, and who will fix them in an eternal state in another world; and that they stand in great need of a Saviour. It makes persons more sensible of the value of Jesus who was crucified, and their need of him; and that it puts them upon earnestly seeking an interest in him. It cannot be but that these things should be apparent to people in general through the land; for these things are not done in a corner; the work has not been confined to a few towns, in some remoter parts, but has been carried on in many places all over the land, and in most of the principal, the populous, and public places in it. Christ in this respect has wrought amongst us, in the same manner that he wrought his miracles in Judea. It has now been continued for a considerable time; so that there has been a great opportunity to observe the manner of the work. And all such as have been very conversant with the subjects of it, see a great deal more, that, by the rules of the apostle, does clearly and certainly show it to be the work of God.

And here I would observe, that the nature and tendency of a spirit that is at work, may be determined with much greater certainty, and less danger of being imposed upon, when it is observed in a great multitude of people of all sorts, and in various places, than when it is only seen in a few, in some particular place, that have been much conversant one with another. A few particular persons may agree to put a cheat upon others, by a false pretence, and professing things of which they never were conscious. But when the work is spread over great parts of a country, in places distant from one another, among people of all sorts and of all ages, and in

multitudes possessed of a sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity; there would be the greatest absurdity in supposing, from all the observation that can be made by all that is heard from and seen in them--for many months together, and by those who are most intimate with them in these affairs, and have long been acquainted with them--that yet it cannot be determined what kind of influence the operation they are under, has upon people's minds, can it not be determined whether it tends to awaken their consciences, or to stupify them; whether it inclines them more to seek their salvation, or neglect it; whether it seems to confirm them in a belief of the Scriptures, or to lead them to deism; whether it makes them have more regard for the great truths of religion, or less?

And here it is to be observed, that for persons to profess that they are so convinced of certain divine truths, as to esteem and love them in a *saving manner*; and for them to profess, that they are *more convinced* or confirmed in the truth of them, than they used to be, and find that they have a greater regard to them than they had before, are two very different things. Persons of honesty and common sense, have much greater right to demand credit to be given to the latter profession, than to the former. Indeed in the former, it is less likely that a people in general should be deceived, than some particular persons. But whether persons' convictions, and the alteration in their dispositions and affections, be in a degree and manner that is saving, is beside the present question. If there be such effects on people's judgments, dispositions, and affections, as have been spoken of, whether they be in a degree and manner that is saving or no, it is nevertheless a sign of the influence of the Spirit of God. Scripture rules serve to distinguish the common influences of the Spirit of God, as well as those that are saving, from the influence of other causes.

And as, by the providence of God, I have for some months past been much amongst those who have been the subjects of the work in question; and particularly, have been in the way of seeing and observing those extraordinary things with which many persons have been offended;--such as persons' crying out aloud, shrieking, being put into great agonies of body, &c.--and have seen the manner and issue of such operations, and the fruits of them, for several months together; many of them being

persons with whom I have been intimately acquainted in soul concerns, before and since; so I look upon myself called on this occasion to give my testimony, that--so far as the nature and tendency of such a work is capable of falling under the observation of a by-stander, to whom those that have been the subjects of it have endeavoured to open their hearts, or can be come at by diligent and particular inquiry--this work has all those marks that have been pointed out. And this has been the case in very many instances, in *every article*; and in many others, all those marks have appeared in a very *great degree*.

The subjects of these uncommon appearances, have been of two sorts; either those who have been in great distress from an apprehension of their sin and misery; or those who have been overcome with a sweet sense of the greatness, wonderfulness, and excellency of divine things. Of the multitude of those of the former sort, that I have had opportunity to observe, there have been very few, but their distress has arisen apparently from real proper conviction, and being in a degree sensible of that which was the truth. And though I do not suppose, when such things were observed to be common, that persons have laid themselves under those violent restraints to avoid outward manifestations of their distress, that perhaps they otherwise would have done; yet there have been very few in whom there has been any appearance of feigning or affecting such manifestations, and very many for whom it would have been undoubtedly utterly impossible for them to avoid them. Generally, in these agonies they have appeared to be in the perfect exercise of their reason; and those of them who could speak, have been well able to give an account of the circumstances of their mind, and the cause of their distress, at the time, and were able to remember, and give an account of it afterwards. I have know a very few instances of those, who, in their great extremity, have for a short space been deprived, in some measure, of the use of reason; but among the many hundreds, and it may be thousands, that have lately been brought to such agonies, I never yet knew one lastingly deprived of their reason. In some that I have known, melancholy has evidently been mixed; and when it is so, the difference is very apparent; their distresses are of another kind, and operate quite after another manner, than when their distress is from mere conviction. It is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions that will not give place either

to Scripture or reason. Some in their great distress have not been well able to give an account of themselves, or to declare the sense they have of things, or to explain the manner and cause of their trouble to others, that yet I have had no reason to think were not under proper convictions, and in whom there has been manifested a good issue. But this will not be at all wondered at, by those who have had much to do with souls under spiritual difficulties: some things of which they are sensible, are altogether new to them; their ideas and inward sensations are new, and what they therefore know not how to express in words. Some who, on first inquiry, said they knew not what was the matter with them, have on being particularly examined and interrogated, been able to represent their case, though of themselves they could not find expressions and forms of speech to do it.

Some suppose, that terrors producing such effects are only a fright. But certainly there ought to be a distinction made between a very great fear, or extreme distress arising from an apprehension of some dreadful truth--a cause fully proportionable to such an effect--and a needless, causeless fright. The latter is of two kinds; either, first, when persons are terrified with that which is not the truth; (of which I have seen very few instances unless in case of melancholy;) or, secondly, when they are in a fright from some terrible outward appearance and noise, and a general notion thence arising. These apprehend, that there is something or other terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds any particular truth whatever. Of such a kind of fright I have seen very little appearance, among either old or young.

Those who are in such extremity, commonly express a great sense of their exceeding wickedness, the multitude and aggravations of their actual sins; their dreadful pollution, enmity, and perverseness; their obstinacy and hardness of heart; a sense of their great guilt in the sight of God; and the dreadfulness of the punishment due to sin. Very often they have a lively idea of the horrible pit of eternal misery; and at the same time it appears to them that the great God who has them in his hands, is exceedingly angry, and his wrath appears amazingly terrible to them. God appears to them so much provoked, and his great wrath so increased; that they are apprehensive of great danger, and that he will not bear with

them any longer; but will now forthwith cut them off, and send them down to the dreadful pit they have in view; at the same time seeing no refuge. They see more and more of the vanity of every thing they use to trust to, and with which they flattered themselves, till they are brought wholly to despair in all, and to see that they are at the disposal of the mere will of the God who is so angry with them. Very many, in the midst of their extremity, have been brought to an extraordinary sense of their fully deserving that wrath, and the destruction which was then before their eyes. They feared every moment, that it would be executed upon them; they have been greatly convinced that this would be altogether just, and that God is indeed absolutely sovereign. Very often, some text of Scripture expressing God's sovereignty, has been set home upon their minds, whereby they have been calmed. They have been brought, as it were, to lie at God's feet; and after great agonies, a little before light has arisen, they have been composed and quiet, in submission to a just and sovereign God; but their bodily strength much spent. Sometimes their lives, to appearance, were almost gone; and then light has appeared, and a glorious Redeemer, with his wonderful, all-sufficient grace, has been represented to them often, in some sweet invitation of Scripture. Sometimes the light comes in suddenly, sometimes more gradually, filling their souls with love, admiration, joy, and self-abasement: drawing forth their hearts after the excellent lovely Redeemer, and longings to lie in the dust before him; and that others might behold, embrace, and be delivered by him. They had longings to live to his glory; but were sensible that they can do nothing of themselves, appearing vile in their own eyes, and having much jealousy over their own hearts. And all the appearances of a real change of heart have followed; and grace has acted, from time to time, after the same manner that is used to act in those that were converted formerly, with the like difficulties, temptations, buffetings, and comforts; excepting that in many, the light and comfort have been in higher degrees than ordinary. Many very young children have been thus wrought upon. There have been some instances very much like those (Mark i. 26. and chap. ix. 26.) of whom we read, that "when the devil had cried with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them." And probably those instances were designed for a type of such things as these. Some have several turns of great agonies, before they are delivered; and others have been in such distress, which has passed off, and no

deliverance at all has followed.

Some object against it as great confusion, when there is a number together in such circumstances making a noise; and say, God cannot be the author of it; because he is the God of order, not of confusion. But let it be considered, what is the proper notion of confusion, but the breaking that order of things, whereby they are properly disposed, and duly directed to their end, so that the order and due connexion of means being broken, they fail of their end. Now the conviction of sinners for their conversion is the obtaining of the end of religious means. Not but that I think the persons thus extraordinarily moved, should endeavour to refrain from such outward manifestations, what they well can, and should refrain to their utmost, at the time of their solemn worship. But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to interrupting and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion, or an unhappy interruption, any more than if a company should meet on the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next sabbath day! We need not be sorry for breaking the order of means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed. He who is going to fetch a treasure, need not be sorry that he is stopped, by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey.

Besides those who are overcome with conviction and distress, I have seen many of late, who have had their bodily strength taken away with a sense of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer, and the wonders of his dying love; with a very uncommon sense of their own littleness and exceeding vileness attending it, with all expressions and appearances of the greatest abasement and abhorrence of themselves. Not only new converts, but many who were, as we hope, formerly converted, have had their love and joy attended with a flood of tears, and a great appearance of contrition and humiliation, especially for their having lived no more to God's glory since their conversion. These have had a far greater sight of their vileness, and the evil of their hearts, than ever they had; with an exceeding earnestness of desire to live better for the time to come, but attended with

greater self-diffidence than ever: and many have been overcome with pity to the souls of others, and longing for their salvation.--And many other things I might mention, in this extraordinary work, answering to every one of those marks which have been insisted on. So that if the apostle John knew how to give signs of a work of the true Spirit, this is such a work.

Providence has cast my lot in a place where the work of God has *formerly* been carried on. I had the happiness to be settled in that place two years with the venerable Stoddard; and was then acquainted with a number who, during that season, were wrought upon under his ministry. I have been intimately acquainted with the experiences of many others who were wrought upon under his ministry, before that period, in a manner agreeable to the doctrine of all orthodox divines. And of late, a work has been carried on there, with very much of uncommon operations; but it is evidently the same work that was carried on there, in different periods, though attended with some new circumstances. And certainly we must throw by all talk of conversion and christian experience; and not only so, but we must throw by our Bibles, and give up revealed religion; if this be not in general the work of God. Not that I suppose the degree of the Spirit's influence is to be determined by the degree of effect on men's bodies; or, that those are always the best experiences which have the greatest influence on the body.

And as to the imprudencies, irregularities, and mixture of delusion that has been observed; it is not at all to be wondered at, that a reformation, after a long-continued and almost universal deadness, should at first, when the revival is new, be attended with such things. In the first creation God did not make a complete world at once; but there was a great deal of imperfection, darkness, and mixture of chaos and confusion, after God first said, "Let there be light," before the whole stood forth in perfect form. When God at first began his great work for the deliverance of his people, after their long-continued bondage in Egypt, there were false wonders mixed with the true for a while; which hardened the unbelieving Egyptians, and made them to doubt of the divinity of the whole work. When the children of Israel first went to bring up the ark of God, after it had been neglected, and had been long absent, they sought not the Lord

after the due order, 1 Chron. xv. 13. At the time when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them. And Solomon's ships, when they brought gold, and silver, and pearls, also brought apes and peacocks. When day-light first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect to have darkness mixt with light for a while, and not have perfect day and the sun risen at once. The fruits of the earth are first green before they are ripe, and come to their proper perfection gradually; and so, Christ tells us, is the kingdom of God. Mark iv. 26, 27, 28. "So is the kingdom of God; as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how: for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The imprudences and errors that have attended this work, are the less to be wondered at, if it be considered, that chiefly young persons have been the subjects of it, who have less steadiness and experience, and being in the heat of youth, are much more ready to run to extremes. Satan will keep men secure as long as he can; but when he can do that no longer, he often endeavours to drive them to extremes, and so to dishonour God, and wound religion in that way. And doubtless it has been one occasion of much misconduct, that in many places, people see plainly that their ministers have an ill opinion of the work; and therefore, with just reason, durst not apply themselves to them as their guides in it; and so are without guides.--No wonder then that when a people are as sheep without a shepherd, they wander out of the way. A people in such circumstances, stand in great and continual need of guides, and their guides stand in continual need of much more wisdom than they have of their own. And if a people have ministers that favour the work, and rejoice in it, yet it is not to be expected that either the people or ministers should know so well how to conduct themselves in such an extraordinary state of things--while it is new, and what they never had any experience of before, and time to see their tendency, consequences, and issue. The happy influence of experience is very manifest at this day, in the people among whom God has settled my abode. The work which has been carried on there this year, has been much purer than that which was wrought there six years before: it has seemed to be more purely spiritual; free from natural and corrupt

mixtures, and any thing savouring of enthusiastic wildness and extravagance. It has wrought more by deep humiliation and abasement before God and men; and they have been much freer from imprudences and irregularities. And particularly there has been a remarkable difference in this respect, that whereas many before, in their comforts and rejoicings, did too much forget their distance from God, and were ready in their conversation together of the things of God, and of their own experiences, to talk with too much lightness; but now they seem to have no disposition that way, but rejoice with a more solemn, reverential, humble joy, as God directs. (Psal. ii. 11.) Not because the joy is not as great, and in many instances much greater. Many among us who were wrought upon in that former season, have now had much greater communications from heaven than they had then. Their rejoicing operates in another manner; it abases them, breaks their hearts, and brings them into the dust. When they speak of their joys, it is not with laughter, but a flood of tears. Thus those that laughed before, weep now, and yet by their united testimony, their joy is vastly purer and sweeter than that which before did more raise their animal spirits. They are now more like Jacob, when God appeared to him at Bethel, when he saw the ladder that reached to heaven, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" And like Moses, when God showed him his glory on the mount, when he made haste and "bowed himself unto the earth."

II. Let us all be hence warned, *by no means to oppose, or do any thing in the least to clog or hinder, the work; but, on the contrary, do our utmost to promote it*. Now Christ is come down from heaven in a remarkable and wonderful work of his Spirit, it becomes all his professed disciples to acknowledge him, and give him honour.

The example of the Jews in Christ's and the apostles' times, is enough to beget in those who do not acknowledge this work, a great jealousy of themselves, and to make them exceeding cautious of what they say or do. Christ then was in the world, and the world knew him not: he came to his own professing people, and his own received him not. That coming of Christ had been much spoken of in the prophecies of Scripture which they had in their hands, and it had been long expected; and yet because Christ

came in a manner they did not expect, and which was not agreeable to their carnal reason, they would not own him. Nay, they opposed him, counted him a madman, and pronounced the spirit that he wrought by to be the spirit of the devil. They stood and wondered at the great things done, and knew not what to make of them; but yet they met with so many stumbling-blocks, that they finally could not acknowledge him. And when the Spirit of God came to be poured out so wonderfully in the apostles' days, they looked upon it as confusion and distraction. They were *astonished* by what they saw and heard, but not *convinced*. And especially was the work of God then rejected by those that were most conceited of their own understanding and knowledge, agreeable to Isa. xxix. 14. "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." And many who had been in reputation for religion and piety, had a great spite against the work, because they saw it tended to diminish their honour, and to reproach their formality and lukewarmness. Some, upon these accounts, maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the Spirit of God, and called it the work of the devil, against inward conviction, and so were guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

There is another, a spiritual coming of Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, that is as much spoken of in scripture prophecy as that first coming, and which has long been expected by the church of God. We have reason to think, from what is said of this, that it will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly, that low state into which the visible church of God has lately been sunk is very parallel with the state of the Jewish church, when Christ came; and therefore no wonder at all, that when Christ comes, his work should appear a strange work to most; yea, it would be wonder if it should be otherwise. Whether the present work be the beginning of that great and frequently predicted coming of Christ to set up his kingdom, or not, it is evident, from what has been said, that it is a work of the same Spirit, and of the same nature. And there is no reason to doubt, but that the conduct of persons who continue long to refuse acknowledging Christ in the work--especially those who are set to be teachers in his church--will be in like manner provoking to God, as it

was in the Jews of old, while refusing to acknowledge Christ; notwithstanding what they may plead of the great stumbling-blocks that are in the way, and the cause they have to doubt of the work. The teachers of the Jewish church found innumerable stumbling-blocks, that were to them insuperable. Many things appeared in Christ, and in the work of the Spirit after his ascension, which were exceeding strange to them; they seemed assured that they had just cause for their scruples. Christ and his work were to the Jews a stumbling-block; "But blessed is he," says Christ, "whosoever shall not be offended in me." As strange and as unexpected as the manner of Christ's appearance was, yet he had not been long in Judea working miracles, before all those who had opportunity to observe, and yet refused to acknowledge him, brought fearful guilt upon themselves in the sight of God; and Christ condemned them, that though "they could discern the face of the sky, and of the earth, yet they could not discern the signs of those times: and why," says he, "even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" Luke xii. at the latter end.

It is not to be supposed that the great Jehovah had bowed the heavens, and appeared here now for so long a time, in such a glorious work of his power and grace--in so extensive a manner, in the most public places of the land, and in almost all parts of it--without giving such evidences of his presence, that great numbers, and even many teachers in his church, can remain guiltless in his sight, without ever receiving and acknowledging him, and giving him honour, and appearing to rejoice in his gracious presence; or without so much as once giving him thanks for so glorious and blessed a work of his grace, wherein his goodness does more appear, than if he had bestowed on us all the temporal blessings that the world affords. A long-continued silence in such a case is undoubtedly provoking to God; especially in ministers. It is a secret kind a opposition, that really tends to hinder the work. Such silent ministers stand in the way of the work of God, as Christ said of old, "He that is not with us is against us." Those who stand wondering at this strange work, not knowing what to make of it, and refusing to receive it--and ready it may be sometimes to speak contemptibly of it, as was the case with the Jews of old--would do well to consider, and to tremble at St. Paul's words to them, Acts xiii. 40, 41. "Beware therefore lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work

in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Those who cannot believe the work to be true, because of the extraordinary degree and manner of it, should consider how it was with the unbelieving lord in Samaria, who said, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" To whom Elisha said, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." Let all to whom this work is a cloud and darkness--as the pillar of cloud and fire was to the Egyptians--take heed that it be not their destruction, while it gives light to God's Israel.

I would entreat those who quiet themselves, that they proceed on a principle of prudence, and are waiting to see the issue of things--and what fruits those that are the subjects of this work will bring forth in their lives and conversations--to consider, whether this will justify a long refraining form acknowledging Christ when he appears so wonderfully and graciously present in the land. It is probable that many of those who are thus waiting, know not for what they are waiting. If they wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling-blocks, it will be like the fool's waiting at the river side to have the water all run by. A work of God without stumbling-blocks is never to be expected. "It must need be that offences come." There never yet was any great manifestation that God made of himself to the world, without many difficulties attending it. It is with the works of God, as with his word: they seem at first full of things that are strange, inconsistent, and difficult to the carnal unbelieving hearts of men. Christ and his work always was, and always will be, a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, a gin and a snare to many. The prophet Hosea, (chap. xiv.) speaking of a glorious revival of religion in God's church--when God would be as the dew unto Israel, who should grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon, whose branches should spread, &c.--concludes all thus; "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

It is probable that the stumbling-blocks that now attend this work, will in some respects be increased, and not diminished. We probably shall see more instances of apostacy and gross iniquity among professors. And if

one kind of stumbling-blocks are removed, it is to be expected that others will come. It is with Christ's works as it was with his parables; things that are difficult to men's dark minds are ordered of purpose, for the trial of their dispositions and spiritual sense; and that those of corrupt minds and of an unbelieving, perverse, cavilling spirit, "seeing might see and not understand." Those who are now waiting to see the issue of this work, think they shall be better able to determine by and by; but probably many of them are mistaken. The Jews that saw Christ's miracles, waited to see better evidences of his being the Messiah; they wanted a sign from heaven; but they waited in vain; their stumbling-blocks did not diminish, but increase. They found no end to them, and so were more and more hardened in unbelief. Many have been praying for that glorious reformation spoken of in Scripture, who knew not what they have been praying for, (as it was with the Jews when they prayed for the coming of Christ,) and who, if it should come, would not acknowledge or receive it.

This pretended prudence, in persons waiting so long before they acknowledged this work, will probably in the end prove the greatest imprudence. Hereby they will fail of any share of so great a blessing, and will miss the most precious opportunity of obtaining divine light, grace, and comfort, heavenly and eternal benefits, that God ever gave in New England. While the glorious fountain is set open in so wonderful a manner, and multitudes flock to it and receive a rich supply for the wants of their souls, they stand at a distance, doubting, wondering, and receiving nothing, and are like to continue thus till the precious season is past.--It is indeed to be wondered at, that those who have doubted of the work, which has been attended with such uncommon external appearances, should be easy in their doubts, without taking thorough pains to inform themselves, by going where such things have been to be seen, narrowly observing and diligently inquiring into them; not contenting themselves with observing two or three instances, nor resting till they were fully informed by their own observation. I do not doubt but that if this course had been taken, it would have convinced all whose minds are not shut up against conviction. How greatly have they erred, who only from the uncertain reproofs of others, have ventured to speak slightly of these things! That caution of an unbelieving Jew might teach them more prudence, Acts v. 38,39. "Refrain from these men and let

them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God." Whether what has been said in this discourse be enough to produce conviction, that this is the work of God or not; yet I hope that for the future, they will at least hearken to the caution of Gamaliel, now mentioned; so as not to oppose it, or say any thing which has even an indirect tendency to bring it into discredit, lest they should be found opposers of the Holy Ghost. There is no kind of sins so hurtful and dangerous to the souls of men, as those committed against the Holy Ghost. We had better speak against God the Father, or the Son, than to speak against the Holy Spirit in his gracious operations on the hearts of men. Nothing will so much tend for ever to prevent our having any benefit of his operations on our own souls.

If there be any who still resolutely go on to speak contemptibly of these things, I would beg of them to take heed that they be not guilty of the unpardonable sin. When the Holy Spirit is much poured out, and men's lusts, lukewarmness, and hypocrisy are reproached by its powerful operations, then is the most likely time of any, for this sin to be committed. If the work goes on, it is well if among the many that show an enmity against it, some be not guilty of this sin, if none have been already. Those who maliciously oppose and reproach this work, and call it the work of the devil, want but one thing of the unpardonable sin, and that is, doing it against inward conviction. And though some are so prudent, as not openly to oppose and reproach this work, yet it is to be feared--at this day, when the Lord is going forth so gloriously against his enemies--that many who are silent and inactive, especially ministers, will bring that curse of the angel of the Lord upon themselves, Judg. v. 23. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants therof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Since the great God has come down from heaven, and manifested himself in so wonderful a manner in this land, it is vain for any of us to expect any other than to be greatly affected by it in our spiritual state and circumstances, respecting the favour of God, one way or other. Those who do not become more happy by it, will become far more guilty and

miserable. It is always so; such a season as proves an acceptable year, and a time of great favour to them who accept and improve it, proves a day of vengeance to others. Isa. lix. 2. When God sends forth his *word*, it shall not return to him void; much less his *Spirit*. When Christ was upon earth in Judea, many slighted and rejected him; but it proved in the issue to be no matter of indifference to them. God made all that people to feel that Christ had been among them; those who did not feel it to their comfort, felt it to their great sorrow. When God only sent the prophet Ezekiel to the children of Israel, he declared that whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, yet they should know that there had been a prophet among them; how much more may we suppose that when God has appeared so wonderfully in this land, that he will make every one to know that the great Jehovah had been in New England.--I come now, in the last place,

III. To apply myself to those who are the friends of this work, who have been partakers of it, and are zealous to promote it.

Let me earnestly exhort such to give diligent heed to themselves to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatever may darken and obscure the work; and to give no occasion to those who stand ready to reproach it. The apostle was careful to cut off occasion from those that desired occasion. The same apostle exhorts Titus, to maintain a strict care and watch over himself, that both his preaching and behaviour might be such as "could not be condemned; that he who was of the contrary part might be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them," Tit. ii. 7, 8. We had need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. It is of no small consequence that we should at this day behave ourselves innocently and prudently. We must expect that the great enemy of this work will especially try his utmost with us; and he will especially triumph if he can prevail in any thing to blind and mislead us. He knows it will do more to further his purpose and interest than if he prevailed against a hundred others. We had need to watch and pray, for we are but little children; this roaring lion is too strong for us, and this old serpent too subtle for us.

Humility and self-diffidence, and an entire dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ, will be our best defense. Let us therefore maintain the strictest watch against spiritual pride, or being lifted up with extraordinary

experiences and comforts, and the high favours of heaven, that any of us may have received. We had need, after such favours, in a special manner to keep a strict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, lest there should arise self-exalting reflections upon what we have received, and high thoughts of ourselves, as being now some of the most eminent of saints and peculiar favourites of heaven, and that the secret of the Lord is especially with us. Let us not presume, that we above all are fit to be advanced as the great instructors and censors of this evil generation; and, in a high conceit of our own wisdom and discerning, assume to ourselves the airs of prophets, or extraordinary ambassadors of heaven. When we have great discoveries of God made to our souls, we should not shine bright in our own eyes. Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the mount, though his face shone so as to dazzle the eyes of Aaron and the people, yet he did not shine in his own eyes; "he wist not that his face shone." Let none think themselves out of danger of this spiritual pride, even in their best frames. God saw that the apostle Paul (though probably the most eminent saint that ever lived) was not out of danger of it, no not when he had just been conversing with God in the third heaven: see 2 Cor. xii. 7. Pride is the worst viper in the heart; it is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, lies lowest of all in the foundation of the whole building of sin, and is the most secret, deceitful, and unsearchable in its ways of working, of any lusts whatever. It is ready to mix with every thing; and nothing is so hateful to God, contrary to the spirit of the gospel, or of so dangerous consequence; and there is no one sin that does so much let in the devil into the hearts of the saints, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances, and that in eminent saints. The devil has come in at this door presently after some eminent experience and extraordinary communion with God, and has woefully deluded and led them astray, till God has mercifully opened their eyes and delivered them; and they themselves have afterwards been made sensible that it was pride that betrayed them.

Some of the true friends of the work of God's Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them, of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do, which was not signified or revealed

any where in the Bible without those impulses. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of a quite different nature from his gracious influences on the hearts of the saints: they are of the nature of the extraordinary *gifts* of the Spirit, and are properly inspiration, such as the prophets and apostles and others had of old; which the apostle distinguishes from the *grace* of the Spirit, 1 Cor. xiii.

One reason why some have been ready to lay weight on such impulses, is an opinion they have had, that the glory of the approaching happy days of the church would partly consist in restoring those *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit. This opinion, I believe, arises partly through want of duly considering and comparing the nature and value of those two kinds of influences of the Spirit, *viz.* those that are ordinary and gracious, and those that are extraordinary and miraculous. The former are by far the most excellent and glorious; as the apostle largely shows. (1 Cor. xii. 31, &c.) Speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he says, "But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I show you a more excellent way;" *i.e.* a more excellent way of the influence of the Spirit. And then he goes on, in the next chapter, to show what that more excellent way is, even the grace of the Spirit, which summarily consists in charity, or divine love. And throughout that chapter he shows the great preference of that above inspiration. God communicates his own nature to the soul in saving *grace* in the heart, more than in all miraculous *gifts*. The blessed image of God consists in *that* and not in *these*. The excellency, happiness, and glory of the soul, immediately consists in the former. That is a root which bears infinitely more excellent fruit. Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God is promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration. A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell. The spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists in the grace of the Spirit, which God bestows only on his favourites and dear children. He has sometimes thrown out the other as it were to dogs and swine, as he did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas; and some who, in the primitive times of the christian church, committed the unpardonable sin. (Heb. vi.) Many wicked men at the day of the judgment will plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles, was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their

eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity and honour, than their miraculous gifts. The things in which we find David comforting himself, are not his being a king, or a prophet, but the holy influences of the Spirit of God in his heart, communicating to him divine light, love, and joy. The apostle Paul abounded in visions, revelations, and miraculous gifts, above all the apostles; but yet he esteems all things but loss for the excellency of the spiritual knowledge of Christ. It was not the gifts but the grace of the apostles, that was the proper evidence of their names being written in heaven; in which Christ directs them to rejoice, much more than in the devils being subject to them. To have grace in the heart, is a higher privilege than the blessed Virgin herself had, in having the body of the second person in the Trinity conceived in her womb, by the power of the Highest overshadowing her: Luke xi. 27, 28. "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him; Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked! But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." See also to the same purpose, Matt. xii. 47, &c.--The influence of the Holy Spirit, or divine charity in the heart, is the greatest privilege and glory of the highest archangel in heaven; yea, this is the very thing by which the creature has fellowship with God himself, with the Father and the Son, in their beauty and happiness. Hereby the saints are made partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ's joy fulfilled in themselves.

The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the *end* of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows, Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13. They are good for nothing, any further than as they are subordinate to this end; they will be so far from profiting any without it, that they will only aggravate their misery. This is, as the apostle observes, the most excellent way of God's communicating his Spirit to his church, it is the greatest glory of the church in all ages. This glory is what makes the church on earth most like the church in heaven, when prophecy, and tongues, and other miraculous gifts, cease. And God communicates his Spirit only in that more excellent way of which the apostle speaks, *viz. charity* or divine love, "which never faileth." Therefore the glory of the approaching happy state of the church does not at all require these extraordinary gifts. As

that state of the church will be nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so I believe it will be like it in this, that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars, and the moon with the reflected light they gave in the night, or in a dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of divine love. The apostle speaks of these gifts of inspiration as childish things, in comparison of the influence of the Spirit in divine love; things given to the church only to support it in its minority, till the church should have a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace should be settled; but as things that should cease, as the church advanced to the state of manhood. 1 Cor. xiii. 11. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things;" compared with the three preceding verses.

When the apostle, in this chapter, speaks of prophecies, tongues, and revelations ceasing, and vanishing away in the church--when the christian church should be advanced from a state of minority to a state of manhood--he seems to have respect to its coming to an adult state in this world, as well as in heaven; for he speaks of such a state of manhood, wherein those three things, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should remain after miracles and revelation had ceased; as in the last verse, and "now abideth ([*gk txt], remaineth*) Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three." The apostle's manner of speaking here shows an evident reference to what he had just been saying before; and here is a manifest *antithesis*, between *remaining*, and that *failing, ceasing,* and *vanishing away*, spoken of in the 8th verse. The apostle had been showing how all those gifts of inspiration, which were the leading-strings of the christian church in its infancy, should vanish away, when the church came to a state of manhood. Then he returns to observe, what things remain after those had failed and ceased; and he observes that those three things shall remain in the church, Faith, Hope, and Charity: and therefore the adult state of the church he speaks of, is the more perfect one at which it shall arrive on earth, especially in the latter ages of the world. And this was the more properly observed to the church at Corinth, upon two accounts; because the apostle had before observed to that church, that they were in a state of infancy, chap. iii. 1, 2. And because that church seems above all others to have abounded with miraculous gifts.--When the expected glorious

state of the church comes, the increase of light shall be so great that it will in some respect answer what is said, ver. 12. of *seeing face to face*. (See Isa. xxiv. 23. and xxv. 7.)

Therefore I do not expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church, nor do I desire it. It appears to me, that it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it. For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacence, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetical visions and revelations the whole year. It appears to me much more probable that God should give immediate revelation to his saints in the dark times of prophecy, than now in the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of his church on earth. It does not appear to me that there is any need of those extraordinary gifts to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world; I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do it without.

I would therefore entreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things. I have seen them fail in very many instances, and know by experience that impressions being made with great power, and upon the minds of true, yea eminent, saints--even in the midst of extraordinary exercises of grace, and sweet communion with God, and attended with texts of Scripture strongly impressed on the mind--are no sure signs of their being revelations from heaven. I have known such impressions fail, in some instances, attended with all these circumstances. They who leave the sure word of prophecy--which God has given us as a light shining in a dark place--to follow such impressions and impulses, leave the guidance of the polar star, to follow *a Jack with a lantern*. No wonder therefore that sometimes they are led into woeful extravagancies.

Moreover, seeing inspiration is not to be expected, *let us not despise human learning*. They who assert that human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry, do not well consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others

mean, the improvement of common knowledge by human and outward means. And therefore to say, that human learning is of no use, is as much as to say that the education of a child, or that the common knowledge which a grown man has more than a little child, is of no use. At this rate, a child of four years old is as fit for a teacher in the church of God, with the same degree of grace--and capable of doing as much to advance the kingdom of Christ, by his instruction--as a very knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more knowledge than a little child, then doubtless if they have more human knowledge still, with the same degree of grace, they would have still greater ability and advantage to do service. An increase of knowledge, without doubt, increases a man's advantage either to do good or hurt, according as he is disposed. It is too manifest to be denied, that God made great use of human learning in the apostle Paul, as he also did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge, obtained by human means, is not to be despised, then it will follow that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, *viz. study*; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God, may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick. And I would pray, that *method*, in public discourses, which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

Another thing I would beg the dear children of God more fully to consider of, is, how far, and upon what grounds, the rules of the Holy Scriptures will truly justify their passing censures upon other professing Christians, as hypocrites, and ignorant of real religion. We all know that there is a judging and censuring of some sort or other, that the Scripture very often and very strictly forbids. I desire that those rules of Scripture may be looked into, and thoroughly weighed; and that it may be considered whether our taking it upon us to discern the state of other--and to pass

sentence upon them as wicked men, though professing Christians, and of a good visible conversation--be not really forbidden by Christ in the New Testament. If it be, then doubtless the disciples of Christ ought to avoid this practice, however sufficient they may think themselves for it, or however needful, or of good tendency, they may think it. It is plain that the sort of judgment which God claims as his prerogative, whatever that be, is forbidden. We know that a certain judging of the hearts of the children of men, is often spoken of as the great prerogative of God, and which belongs only to him; as in 1 Kings viii. 39. "Forgive, and do, and give unto every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." And if we examine, we shall find that the judging of hearts which is spoken of as God's prerogative, relates not only to the aims and dispositions of men's hearts in particular actions, but chiefly to the state of their hearts as the professors of religion, and with regard to that profession. This will appear very manifest by looking over the following scriptures; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Psal. vii. 9, 10, 11. Psal. xxvi. throughout. Prov. xvi. 2. and xvii. 3. and xxi. 2. Job ii. 23, 24, 25. Rev. ii. 22, 23. That sort of judging which is God's proper business, is forbidden, as Rom. xiv. 4. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." Jam. iv. 12. "There is one lawgiver that is able to save or destroy; who are thou that judgest another?" 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea I judge not mine own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

Again, whatsoever kind of judging is the proper work and business of the day of judgment, is what we are forbidden, as in 1 Cor. iv. 5. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." But to distinguish hypocrites, that have the form of godliness and the visible conversation of godly men, from true saints; or, to separate the sheep from the goats, is the proper business of the day of judgment; yea it is represented as the main business and end of that day. They therefore do greatly err who take it upon them positively to determine who are sincere, and who are not--to draw the dividing line between true saints and hypocrites, and to separate between sheep and goats, setting the one on

the right hand and the other on the left--and to distinguish and gather out the tares from amongst the wheat. Many of the servants of the owner of the field are very ready to think themselves sufficient for this, and are forward to offer their service to this end; but their Lord says, “May, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest;” and in the time of the harvest I will take care to see a thorough separation made; as Matt. xiii. 28, 29, 30. Agreeably to that forementioned prohibition of the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 5. “Judge nothing before the time.” In this parable, by the servants who have the care of the fruit of the field, is doubtless meant the same with the servants who have the care of the fruit of the vineyard, Luke xx. and who are elsewhere represented as servants of the Lord of the harvest, appointed as labourers in his harvest. These we know are ministers of the gospel. *Now* is that parable in the 13th of Matthew fulfilled: “While men sleep,” (during a long sleepy, dead time in the church,) “the enemy has sowed tares;” now is the time “when the blade is sprung up,” and religion is reviving; and now some of the servants who have the care of the field say, “Let us go and gather up the tares.”--I know there is a great aptness in men who suppose they have had some experience of the power of religion, to think themselves sufficient to discern and determine the state of others by a little conversation with them; and experience has taught me that this is an error. I once did not imagine that the heart of man had been so unsearchable as it is. I am less charitable, and less uncharitable than once I was. I find more things in wicked men that may counterfeit, and make a fair show of, piety; and more ways that the remaining corruption of the godly may make them appear like carnal men, formalists, and dead hypocrites, than once I knew of. The longer I live, the less I wonder that God challenges it as his prerogative to try the hearts of the children of men, and directs that this business should be let alone till harvest. I desire to adore the wisdom of God, and his goodness to me and my fellow-creatures, that he has not committed this great business into the hands of such a poor, weak, and dim-sighted creature--one of so much blindness, pride, partiality, prejudice, and deceitfulness of heart--but has committed it into the hands of one infinitely fitter for it, and has made it his prerogative.

The talk of some persons, and the account they give of their experiences,

is exceedingly satisfying, and such as forbids and banishes the thought of their being any other than the precious children of God. It obliges, and as it were forces, full charity; but yet we must allow the Scriptures to stand good that speak of every thing in the saint, belonging to the spiritual and divine life, as hidden. (Col. iii. 3, 4.) Their food is the hidden manna; they have meat to eat that others know not of; a stranger intermeddles not with their joys. The heart in which they possess their divine distinguishing ornaments, is the hidden man, and in the sight of God only, 1 Pet. iii. 4. Their new name, which Christ has given them, no man knows but he that receives it, Rev. ii. 17. The praise of the true Israelites, whose circumcision is that of the heart, is not of men but of God, Rom. ii. 29. that is, they can be certainly known and discerned to be Israelites, so as to have the honour that belongs to such, only of God; as appears by the use of the like expression by the same apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Here he speaks of its being God's prerogative to judge who are upright Christians, and what he will do at the day of judgment, adding, "and then shall every man have praise of God."

The instance of *Judas* is remarkable; whom--though he had been so much amongst the rest of the disciples, all persons of true experience, yet--his associates never seemed to have entertained a thought of his being any other than a true disciple, till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice.--And the instance of *Ahitophel* is also very remarkable; David did not suspect him, though so wise and holy a man, so great a divine, and had such a great acquaintance with Scripture. He knew more than all his teachers, more than the ancients, was grown old in experience, and was in the greatest ripeness of his judgment. He was a great prophet, and was intimately acquainted with Ahitophel, he being his familiar friend, and most intimate companion in religious and spiritual concerns. Yet David not only never discovered him to be a hypocrite, but relied upon him as a true saint. He relished his religious discourse, it was sweet to him and he counted him an eminent saint; so that he made him above any other man his guide and counsellor in soul matters; but yet he was not only no saint, but a notoriously wicked man, a murderous, vile wretch. Psal. lv. 11-14. "Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets: for it was not an open enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was

it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

To suppose that men have ability and right do determine the state of the souls of visible Christians, and so to make an open separation between saints and hypocrites, that true saints may be of one visible company, and hypocrites of another, separated by a partition that men make, carries in it an inconsistency: for it supposes that God has given men power to make another visible church, within his visible church; for by visible Christians or visible saints is meant, persons who have a right to be received as such in the eye of a public charity. None can have a right to exclude any one of this visible church but in the way of that regular ecclesiastical proceeding, which God has established in his visible church.-I beg of those who have a true zeal for promoting this work of God, well to consider these things. I am persuaded, that as many of them as have much to do with souls, if they do not hearken to me now, will be of the same mind when they have had more experience.

And another thing that I would entreat the zealous friends of this glorious work of God to avoid, is managing the controversy with opposers with too much heat, and appearance of an angry zeal; and particularly insisting very much in public prayer and preaching, on the persecution of opposers. If their persecution were ten times so great as it is, me thinks it would not be best to say so much about it. If it becomes Christians to be like lambs, not apt to complain and cry when they are hurt; it becomes them to be dumb and not to open their mouth, after the example of our dear Redeemer; and not to be like swine, that are apt to scream aloud when they are touched. We should not be ready presently to think and speak of tire from heaven, when the Samaritans oppose us, and will not receive us into their villages. God's zealous ministers would do well to think of the direction the apostle Paul gave to a zealous minister, 2 Tim. ii. 24--26. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of

the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

I would humbly recommend to those that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and would advance his kingdom, a good attendance to that excellent rule of prudence which Christ has left us, Matt. ix. 16, 17. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." I am afraid the wine is now running out in some part of this land, for want of attending to this rule. For though I believe we have confined ourselves too much to a certain stated method and form in the management of our religious affairs; which has had a tendency to cause all our religion to degenerate into mere formality; yet whatever has the appearance of a great innovation--that tends much to shock and surprise people's minds, and to set them a talking and disputing--tends greatly to hinder the progress of the power of religion. It raises the opposition of some, diverts the mind of others, and perplexes many with doubts and scruples. It causes people to swerve from their great business, and turn aside to vain jangling. Therefore that which is very much beside the common practice, unless it be a thing in its own nature of considerable importance, had better be avoided. Herein we shall follow the example of one who had the greatest success in propagating the power of religion. 1 Cor. ix. 20-23. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

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Hope and Comfort Usually Follow Genuine Humiliation and Repentance

***"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."* -- Hosea 2:15**

In the context, the church of Israel is first threatened with the awful desolation which God was about to bring upon her for her dealing so falsely and treacherously with God; because though, in the bold language of the prophet, she had been married to God, she had yet gone after other lovers, and had committed adultery with them. “For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread, and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.” Therefore God threatened that he would strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst, and that he would discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and destroy her vines and fig trees, and make them a forest. So the prophet goes on terribly threatening her to the end of the thirteenth verse. And those things were fulfilled in the captivity of Israel in the land of Assyria. But in the verse preceding the text, and in the remainder of the chapter, there follows a gracious promise of mercy, which God would show her in the days of the gospel. “Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.” “I will allure her,” that is, I will court or woo her again, as a young man woos a virgin, whom he desires to make his wife. God, for her committing adultery with other lovers, had threatened that he would give her a bill of divorce, as verse second, “Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.” But here in the latter part of the chapter, God promises that in gospel times he would make her his wife again, as in the sixteenth verse, “And it shall be at that day that thou shalt call me Ishi;” that is “my

husband." And so in verse 19, 20, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth the unto me in faithfulness." Here in the fourteenth verse, God promises that he will woo her, and in the latter part of the verse, he shows in what manner he will deal with her when he is about to woo or allure her. He would first bring her into the wilderness; that is, he would bring her into trouble and distress, and so humble her, and then allure her by speaking comfortably or pleasantly to her, as a young man does to a maid whom he woos. Then follow the words of the text.

I. We may observe what God would give to the children of Israel; *viz.* Hope and comfort. He promises to give her vineyards; which being spiritually interpreted as most of the prophecies of gospel times are to be interpreted, signifies spiritual comforts. Vineyards afford wine, which is comfort to those who are of heavy hearts. Pro. 31:6, "Give wine to those that are of heavy hearts." Wine is to make glad the heart of man. Psa. 104:15. Gospel rest and peace are sometimes prophesied of, under the metaphor of every man's sitting under his vine and under his own fig tree. God promises to give her hope, to open a door of hope for her, and to give her songs; that is, to give her spiritual joy, and both cause and disposition joyfully to sing praises to God.

II. We may observe after what manner God would bestow those benefits. *First,* they should be given after great trouble and abasement. Before she had this hope and comfort given, she should be brought into great trouble and distress to humble her. He promises to give her her vineyards from thence; that is, from the wilderness spoken of in the foregoing verse, into which it is said that God would bring her, before he spoke comfortably to her. God would bring her into the wilderness, and then give her vineyards. God's bringing her into the wilderness was to humble her, and fit her to receive vineyards, and to make her see her dependence on God for them, that she might not attribute her enjoyment of them to her idols, as she had done before, for which reason God took them away, as in the twelfth verse, "And I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest." There it is threatened that God will turn her

vineyards into a forest, or wilderness. Here it is promises that he would turn the wilderness into vineyards, as Isa. 32:15, "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." She should first be in a wilderness, where she shall see that she cannot help herself, nor any of her idols help, or give her any vineyards. And then God will help her, that she shall see that it is God, and not any of her idols or lovers. God would first bring her into a wilderness, and thence give her vineyards, as God first brought the children of Israel into a dreadful wilderness. So God opened a door of hope to them in the valley of Achor, which is a word that signifies trouble, and was so called from the trouble which the children of Israel suffered by the sin of Achor. So God is wont first to make their sin a great trouble to them, an occasion of a great deal of distress, before he opens a door of hope. God promises to make her sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. This plainly refers to the joyful song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red sea. The children of Israel there had great joy and comfort; but just before they had great trouble. They had been in extreme distress by the oppression of their taskmasters; and just before this triumphant song, they were brought to extremity and almost to despair, when Pharaoh and the Egyptians appeared ready to swallow them up.

Second, this hope and comfort should be bestowed on the slaying and forsaking of sin. That is the troubler of the soul. It should be given in the valley of Achor, which was the valley where the troubler of Israel was slain as you may see in Jos. 7:26; and the place where the children of Israel sang, when they came up out of the land of Egypt. The eastern shore of the Red sea was the place where they saw their enemies and old taskmaster, the types of men's lusts, which are sinners' taskmasters, lie dead on the sea-shore, and of whom they took their final leave. And God had told them, that their enemies whom they had seen that day, they should see no more forever.

DOCTRINE

God is wont to cause hope and comfort to arise in the soul after trouble and humbling for sin, and according as the troubler is slain and forsaken.

I would show,

I. That it is thus with respect to the first true hope and comfort which is given to the soul at conversion.

II. That God is wont to bestow hope and comfort on Christians from time to time in this way.

I. God is wont to cause hope and comfort to arise to the soul in conversion after trouble and humbling for sin, and upon the slaying of the troubler.

First, it is God's manner to bestow hope and comfort on a soul in conversion after trouble and humbling for sin. Under this head are three things to be observed. 1. The trouble itself. 2. The cause, *viz.* sin. 3.The humbling.

1. Souls are wont to be brought into trouble before God bestows true hope and comfort. The corrupt hearts of men naturally incline to stupidity and senselessness before God comes with the awakening influences of his Spirit. They are quiet and secure. They have no true comfort and hope, and yet they are quiet; they are at ease. They are in miserable slavery, and yet seek not a remedy. They say, as the children of Israel did in Egypt to Moses, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." But if God has a design of mercy to them, it is his manner before he bestows true hope and comfort on them, to bring them into trouble, to distress them, and spoil their ease and false quietness, and to rouse them out of their old resting and sleeping places, and to bring them into a wilderness. They are brought into great trouble and distress, so that they can take no comfort in those things in which they used to take comfort. Their hearts are pinched and stung, and they can find no ease in anything. They have, as it were, an arrow sticking fast in them, which causes grievous and continual pain, an arrow which they cannot shake off, or pull out. The pain and anguish of it drinks up their spirit. Their worldly enjoyments were a sufficient good before; but they are not now. They wander about with wounded hearts, seeking rest, and finding none; like one wandering in a dry and parched wilderness under the burning, scorching heat of the sun, seeking for some shadow where he may sit down and rest, but finding

none. Wherever he goes the beams of the sun scorch him. Or he seeks some fountain of, cool water to quench his thirst, but finds not a drop. He is like David in his trouble, who wandered about in the wilderness, Saul pursuing him wherever he went, driving and hunting him from one wilderness to another, from one mountain to another, and from one cave to another, giving him no rest. To such sinners, all things look dark, and they know not what to do, nor whither to turn. If they look forward or backward, to the right hand or the left, all is gloom and perplexity. If they look to heaven, behold darkness. If they look to the earth, behold trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish. Sometimes they hope for relief, but they are disappointed, and so again and again they travail in pain, and a dreadful sound is in their ears. They are terrified and affrighted, and they seek refuge, as a poor creature pursued by an enemy. He flies to one refuge and there is beset, and that fails; then he flies to another, and then is driven out of that. And his enemies grow thicker and thicker about, encompassing him on every side. They are like those of whom we read in Isa. 24:17, 18. Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon them, and when they flee from the noise of the fear they are taken in the pit; and if they come up out of the pit, they are taken in the snare. So that they know not what to do. They are like the children of Israel, while Achor troubled them. They go forth against their enemies, and they are smitten down and flee before them. They call on God, but he does not answer, nor seem to regard them. Sometimes they find something in which they take pleasure for a little time, but it soon vanishes away, and leaves them in greater distress than before. And sometimes they are brought to the very borders of despair. Thus they are brought into the wilderness, and into the valley of Achor, or of trouble.

2. Sin is the trouble or the cause of this trouble. Sin is the disease of the soul, and such a disease as will, if the soul is not benumbed, cause exceeding pain. Sin brings guilt, and that brings condemnation and wrath. All this trouble arises from conviction of sin. Awakened sinners are convinced that they are sinful. Before the sinner thought well of himself, or was not convinced that he was very sinful. But now he is led to reflect first on what he has done, how wickedly he has spent his time, what wicked acts or practices he has been guilty of. And afterwards in the progress of his awakenings, he is made sensible of something of the sin

and plague of his heart. They are made sensible of the guilt and wrath which sin brings. The threatening of God's law, are set home, and they are made sensible that God is angry, and that his wrath is dreadful. They are led to consider the dreadfulness of that punishment, which God has threatened. The affection or principle, which is wrought upon to cause this trouble, is fear. They are afraid of the punishment of sin, and God's wrath for it. They are commonly afraid of many things here in this world as the fruit of sin. They are afraid that God will not hear their prayers, that he is so angry with them, that he will never give them converting grace. They are afraid oftentimes that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or at least that they have been guilty of such sin as God will never pardon; that their day is past, and that God has given them up to judicial hardness of heart and blindness of mind. Or if they are not already, they are afraid they shall be. They are afraid oftentimes, that the Spirit of God is not striving with them now, that their fears are from some other cause. Sometimes they are afraid that it is only the devil, who terrifies and afflicts them; and that if the Spirit of God is striving with them, he will be taken from then, and they shall be left in a Christless state. They are afraid that if they seek salvation, it will be to no purpose, and that they shall only make their case worse and worse; that they are farther and farther from anything which is good, and that there is less probability now of their being converted, than when they began to seek. Sometimes they fear, that they have but a short time to live, and that God will soon cast them to hell; that none ever were as they were, who ever found mercy; that their case is peculiar, and that all wherein they differ from others is for the worse. They have fears on every side. Oftentimes they are afraid of everything. Everything looks dark, and they are afraid that everything will prove ruinous to them. But in the issue of all they are afraid they shall perish forever. They are afraid that when they die they shall go down to hell, and there have their portion appointed them in everlasting burnings. This is the sum of all their fears. And the cause of this fear is a consciousness of the guilt of sin. It is sin, which is the cruel taskmaster, which oppresses them, and chastises them; and sin is the cruel Pharaoh, which pursues them. As the children of Israel, before they came to sing with joy after they came out of the land of Egypt, were under great trouble from their taskmasters, and sighed by reason of the hard bondage, and then were pursued, and put into dreadful fear at the Red

sea. It was their taskmasters who made them all this trouble. So it is sin which makes all the trouble which a sinner suffers under awakenings. Their trouble for sin is no gracious, godly sorrow for sin; for that does not arise merely from fear, but from love. It is not an evangelical, but legal, repentance of which we are speaking, which is not from love to God, but only self love.

3. The end of this trouble in those to whom God designs mercy is to humble them. God leads them into the wilderness before he speaks comfortably to them, for the same cause that he led the children of Israel into the wilderness before he brought them into Canaan, which we are told was to humble them. Deu. 8:2, "And thou shalt remember all the way, which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart." Man naturally trusts in himself and magnifies himself. And for man to enjoy only ease and prosperity and quietness tends to nourish and establish such a disposition. Deu. 32:15, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." But by trouble and distress, and by a sense of a heavy load of guilt, God brings men down into the dust. God brings souls thus into the wilderness to show them their own helplessness, to let them see that they have nothing to which they can turn for help, to make them sensible that they are not rich and increased with goods, but wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; to show them that they are utterly undone and ruined, to make them sensible of their exceeding wickedness, and to bring them to be sensible how justly God might cast them off forever. Those legal troubles tend to show them their utter inability to help themselves, as their fears put them on using their utmost endeavors, and trying their utmost strength; and by continuing in that way their experience teaches them their weakness, and they find they can do nothing. It puts them upon repeated trials, and they have as repeated disappointments. But repeated disappointments tend to bring a man to give up the case, and to despair of help in that way in which he has tried for it. It tends to make men sensible of the utter insufficiency of their wisdom, and bring them to see their own exceeding blindness and ignorance. For fear, and concern, and distress, necessarily put a person on intensely thinking, and studying, and contriving for relief. But when men have been thus trying their own wisdom and invention to their

utmost, and find it fails, and signifies nothing, and is altogether to no purpose, it makes them more and more sensible of their weakness and blindness, and brings them to confess themselves fools, and blind, as to those things which concern their relief. They are like one who is placed in the midst of a vast hideous wilderness. At first it may be he may not be sensible but that he knows the way home, and can directly go in the way which leads out of the wilderness. But after he has tried and has traveled awhile, and finds that he cannot find the way, and that he spends himself in vain, and only goes round and round, and comes to the same place again at last, he is brought to confess that he knows not where to go, nor what to do, and that he is sensible that he, like one who is perfectly lost, and altogether in darkness, and is brought at last to yield the case and stand still, and do nothing but call for help, that if possible any one may hear, and lead him in the wilderness. For this end God leads men into the wilderness before he speaks comfortably to them. The troubles which they have for sin tend to bring them to be sensible how justly God may cast them off forever. And this brings them to reflect on their sins; for these are the things of which they are afraid. When a man is terribly afraid of things with which he is surrounded, this engages his eyes to behold; he looks intensely on them, and sees more and more how frightful and terrible they are. When they are in fear, they take much more notice of their sins than at other times. They think more how wickedly they have lived, and observe more the corrupt and wicked working of their own hearts, and so are more and more sensible what vile creatures they are. This makes them more and more sensible how angry God is, and how terrible his anger is. They try to appease and to reconcile God by their own righteousness, but it fails. God still appears as an angry God, refusing to hear their prayers, or appear for their help, till they despair in their own righteousness, and yield the case. And by more and more of a sight of themselves are brought to confess that they lie justly exposed to damnation, and have nothing by which to defend themselves. God appears more and more as a terrible being to them, till they have done with any imaginations, that they have anything sufficient to recommend them, or reconcile them to such a God. Thus God is wont first to bring the soul into trouble by reason of sin, and so to humble the soul, before he gives true hope and comfort in conversion.

Second, this hope and comfort are given upon the slaying of the troubler. Whatever troubles there are for sin, yet if the sin is not slain, it cannot be expected but that there will be trouble still. Before there will be no true comfort. The soul may return to stupidity and carelessness, and may receive a false peace and hope, and sin be kept alive; but no true hope. Persons may be exceedingly troubled for sin, and yet sin be saved alive. Persons may seem to lament they have done thus and thus, and weep many tears, and cry out of their sinfulness and wickedness, and yet the life of sin be whole in them. But if so, they never shall receive true comfort. They may refrain from sin; there may be a great reformation, and exact life for a time. Or there may be a total reformation of some particular ways of sin, and yet not true hope; because sin is only restrained; it is not slain. Many men are brought to restrain sin, and to give it slight wounds, who cannot be brought to kill it. Wicked men are loth to kill sin. They have been very good friends to it ever since they have been in the world, and have always treated it as one of their most familiar and best friends. They have allowed it the best room in their hearts, and have given it the best entertainment they could, and they are very loth to destroy it. But until this be done, God never will give them true comfort. If ever men come to have a true hope, they must do as the children of Israel did by Achan. Jos. 7:24, 25, 26, "And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them into the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called the valley of Achor unto this day." So if ever men come to have any true hope, they must take sin which is the troubler, and all which belongs to it, even that which seems most dear and precious, though it be as choice as Achan's silver and wedge of gold, and utterly destroy them, and burn them with fire, to be sure to make a thorough end of them, as it were, bury them and raise over them a great heap of stones, to lay a great weight upon them, to make sure of it that they shall never rise more. Yea, and thus they must serve all his sons and daughters. They

must not save some of the accursed brood alive. All the fruits of sin must be forsaken. There must not be some particular lust, some dear sinful enjoyment, some pleasant child of sin, spared. But all must be stoned and burned. If we do thus, we may expect to have trouble cease, and light to arise, as it was in the camp of Israel after slaying the troubler.

Inquiry. Here it may be inquired, what is implied in slaying sin at conversion? And it implies these several things:

First, there must be a conviction of the evil of it as against God. All is carried on by conviction. Those legal troubles, which are before conversion, arise from some conviction of the being of sin, and the guilt and danger of it. And the slaying of sin is by conviction of its evil and hateful nature. To slay the troubler, we must find him out, as the children of Israel did before they slew Achan. They rose early in the morning, and searched, and brought all Israel by their tribes. And then searched the tribe, which was taken by families, and the family by particular persons, and so found him.

Second, it is to have the heart turned from, and turned against, it in hatred. The troubler is never slain, but by a thorough and saving change of heart and renovation of nature, so that that which before loved sin and chose it, may now hate and abhor it, and may disrelish it, and all its ways, and especially hate their former ways of sin.

Third, forsaking and renouncing it. Let men pretend what they may, their hearts are not turned from sin, if they do not forsake it. He is not converted, who is not really come to a disposition utterly to forsake all ways of sin. If ever sinners have true hope and comfort, they must take a final leave of sin, as the children of Israel did of the Egyptians at the Red sea. Persons may have a great deal of trouble from sin, and many conflicts and struggles with it, and seem to forsake it for a time, and yet not forsake it finally; as the children of Israel had with the Egyptians. They had a long struggle with them before they were freed from them. How many judgments did God bring upon the Egyptians, before they would let them go? And sometimes Pharaoh seemed as if he would let them go; but yet when it came to the proof he refused. And when they departed from Rameses doubtless they thought then they had got rid of

them. They did not expect to see them any more. But when they arrived at the Red sea, and looked behind them, they saw them pursuing them. They found it a difficult thing wholly to get rid of them. But when they were drowned in the Red sea, then they took an everlasting leave of them. The king and all the chiefs of them were dead. And therefore God said to them [in] Exo. 14:13, "The Egyptians, whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever." So sinners must not only part with sin for a little time, but they must forsake it forever, and be willing never to see or have anything to do with their old sinful ways and enjoyments. They must forsake that which is their iniquity, the sin which most easily besets them, and to which by their constitution or custom they have been most addicted, which has been, as it were, the dearest of all, and most respected, as a king among the army of sins; though that must be slain too, as Pharaoh, the king of the Egyptians, was in the Red sea. And we must not do as Saul did, when God sent him to kill the Amalekites; but he saved the king of the Amalekites alive, which cost him his kingdom.

Fourth, it implies embracing Christ, and trusting in him as the Savior from sin. We must look to him not only as a Savior from the punishment of sin, but we must receive and embrace him as a Savior from sin itself. We cannot deliver ourselves from sin. We cannot slay this enemy of ourselves. He is too strong an enemy for us. We can no more slay sin ourselves, that the children of Israel, who were themselves a poor feeble company, a mixed multitude, unprepared to resist such a force, could themselves slay Pharaoh, and all his mighty army with chariots and horsemen. It was Christ in the pillar of cloud and fire, who fought for them. They had nothing to do but trust in him. Exo.14:14, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." They could never have drowned the Egyptians in the sea. It was Christ who did it; for the pillar of cloud stood between them and the Israelites, and when they were up out of the sea, then Christ brought on them the waters of the sea. Our enemies must be drowned in the all-sufficient fountain, and as it were, sea of Christ's blood, as the Egyptians were in the Red sea, and then we may sing, as the children of Israel did in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt. When sin is thus slain, then God is wont to open a door of hope, a door through which there flashes a sweet light out of heaven upon the soul. Then comfort arises, and then is there a new song

in the mouth, even praise unto God.

II. God is wont to bestow hope and comfort from time to time in the same manner on Christians. In the consideration of this matter I would show,

First, that Christians are frequently in darkness, and their hope is often greatly obscured.

Second, that it is sin which is the occasion of this darkness.

Third, their trouble is commonly much increased a little before the renewal of light and hope.

Fourth, their darkness is not perpetual, but God is wont to cause hope and comfort to rise again.

Fifth, that hope and comfort are renewed to them on the slaying of the troubler.

First, it is often the case that Christians are under darkness, and their hope is greatly clouded. God is wont to give his saints hope and comfort at their first conversion, which sometimes remains without any great interruption for a considerable time. And some Christians live abundantly more in the light than others. Some for many years together have but little darkness. God is pleased to distinguish them from their neighbors. He mercifully keeps them from those occasions of darkness, into which he suffers others to fall, and gives them of the light of his countenance. God exercises his sovereignty in this matter, as he does in giving converting grace. As he bestows that on whom he pleases, so he bestows on some of those who are converted more light, on others less, according as it pleases him. But many Christians meet with a great deal of darkness, and see times in which their hopes are much clouded. Sometimes the sweet and comfortable influences of God's Spirit are withdrawn. They were wont to have spiritual discoveries made of God and Christ to their souls, but now they have none. Their minds seem to be darkened, and they cannot see spiritual things, as they have done in times

past. Formerly, when they read the Scriptures, they used often to have light come in, and they seemed to have an understanding and relish for what they read, and were filled with comfort. But now when they read, it is all a dead letter and they have no taste for it, and are obliged to force themselves to read. They seem to have no pleasure in it, but it is a mere task and burden. Formerly they used to have passages of Scripture come to their minds, when they were not reading, which brought much light and sweetness with them. But now they have none. Formerly they used to feel the sweet exercises of grace. They could trust in God, and could find a spirit of resignation to his will, and had love drawn forth, and sweet longings after God and Christ, and a sweet complacence in God; but now they are dull and dead. Formerly they used to meet with God in the ordinances of his house. It was sweet to sit and hear the word preached, and it seemed to bring light and life. They used to feel life and sweetness in public prayers, and their hearts were elevated in singing God's praises. But now it is otherwise. Formerly they used to delight in the duty of prayer. The time which they spent in their closet between God and their own souls was sweet to them. But now when they go thither, they do not meet God; and they take no delight in drawing near to God in their closets. When they do pray, it seems to be a mere lifeless, heartless performance. They utter such and such words, but they seem to be nothing but words; their hearts are not engaged. Their minds are continually wandering and going to and fro, after one vanity and another. With this decay of the exercise of grace, their hope greatly decays; and the evidences of their piety are exceedingly clouded. When they look into their hearts, it seems to them that they can see nothing there, from which they should hope. And when they consider after what manner they live, it seems to them to argue, that they have no grace. They have but little of anything which is new, to furnish comfortable evidence to them of their good estate; and as to their old evidences, they are greatly darkened. Their former experience, in which they took great comfort, looks dim, and a great way off, and out of sight to them. They have almost forgotten it, and have no pleasure in thinking or speaking of it. And sometimes true Christians are brought into terrible distress. They are not only deprived of their former comforts, and have their former hopes obscured, but they have inward distressing darkness. God does not only hide his face, but they have a sense of his anger. He seems to frown upon them. So it

appears to have been with David. Psa. 42:7, “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” So with Heman. Psa. 88:6, 7, “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.”

Second, it is sin which is the occasion of this trouble and darkness. Whenever the godly meet with such darkness, there is some Achan in their souls which is the occasion of all this; and this is sin. This is the occasion of the darkness of the godly, as well as the troubles which natural men have under awakenings. It is not for want of love in God towards his saints, or readiness to grant comfort to them. Neither is God’s hand shortened, that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that he cannot hear. It is their sin which hides God’s face from them. Isa. 59:1, 2. Sin is the occasion of this darkness of the saints, in these three ways:

1. Sometimes it is owing to the weakness and small degree of grace infused in conversion, and the strength of remaining corruption. The work of God is the same in all who are converted, so far that their sin is mortified, and that which reigned before does not reign now. The heart is changed from darkness to light, and from death to life, and turned from sin to God. And yet the work is very different with respect to the degree of mortification of sin, and the degree of grace which is infused. Some have more spiritual light given in their first conversion than others; have greater discoveries, and are brought at once to a much greater acquaintance with God, and have their hearts more humbled, and more weaned from sin and the world, and more filled with the love of God and Christ, and are brought nearer to heaven than others. Some at first conversion have a much more eminent work of grace in their hearts than others. Some have emphatically but little grace infused, and consequently their corruptions are left in much greater strength. When it is so, it is no wonder that such have a weaker hope, and less light and comfort, than others. The natural tendency of indwelling sin in the saints, is to cloud and darken the mind; and therefore, the more of it remains, the more will it have this effect. Persons can know their own good estate in no other way than by seeking, or perceiving grace in their hearts. But certainly the less of it there is, with the more difficulty will it be seen or felt. As

indwelling sin prevails, so does it the more obscure and cloud grace, as a great smoke clouds and hides a spark. And therefore the more there is of this indwelling sin, the more will grace be hid. The greater the strength in which corruption is left, the more rare will be the good frames which the godly have, and the more frequent and of longer continuance will be their times of darkness. It may be, the darkness with which the saints meet is from some particular corruption, which has always hitherto been in too great prevalence and strength, and has never yet been mortified to such a degree, but that it continues a great troubler in the soul. Grace being weak, the sin of the constitution takes advantage, whether that be a proud and haughty temper, or a covetous spirit, or an addictedness to some sensuality, or a peevish, fretful, discontented spirit, or ill temper, or a quarrelsome spirit, or disposition to high resentment. Or whether it be any other corrupt disposition, which is the sin to which they are chiefly exposed by natural temper, or by their education and former custom. If the grace which is infused at conversion, be comparatively weak, this constitutional sin will take the advantage, and will dreadfully cloud the mind, and hinder spiritual comfort, and bring trouble and darkness. There is a great variety in the work of grace upon men's hearts, as to the particular discoveries which are then given, and the particular graces which are in chief exercise; whereby it comes to pass, that some in their conversion are more assisted against that particular corruption which is its opposite. Hence some particular corruptions may be left in much greater prevalence than others, and so be a greater occasion of darkness. Thus some, in the particular experiences which they have, may not be so especially assisted against pride as others, whereby their pride may take occasion to work. And when they have had spiritual discoveries and comfort, they may be lifted up with them. And this may be an occasion of displeasing and grieving his Holy Spirit, and so of their having a great deal of darkness. They may not have seen so much of their own emptiness as some others, and so their corruption may work much more by self-confidence than others; and no wonder that self-confident persons meet with darkness. No wonder that when men trust in themselves for light and grace, that their confidence fails, and they go without that for which they trusted in themselves.

2. Sometimes the saints are in great darkness on occasion of some gross

transgression into which they have fallen. So it was with David, when he fell into gross sin in the matter of Uriah. He exceedingly quenched the influences of the Spirit of God by it, and God withdrew those influences from him, and the comforts which they had imparted; as appears by his earnestly praying for their restoration. Psa. 51:12, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” When Christians fall into gross transgression, it is commonly the fact that an exceedingly deep darkness follows.

3. When they do not fall into any particular gross and scandalous transgression, yet they sometimes exceedingly darken their minds by corrupt frames and evil habits, into which they fall. There is much remaining corruption in the hearts of Christians, and oftentimes they get into very ill frames. Some particular corruptions grow very prevalent. Sometimes they grow proud and conceited of themselves, either on account of their own godliness, and the good opinion others have of them, or on some other account. Sometimes they fall into a worldly frame, and spiritual things grow more tasteless to them, and their hearts are desperately bent on the acquisition of worldly good. Sometimes their minds grow light and vain, and their affections are wholly fixed on the vanities of youth, on dress, and gaiety, and fashion. Some, because their minds are not occupied as once they were, with spiritual enjoyments and delights, sweetly meditating on heavenly things, breathing and longing after them, and earnestly seeking them, become the slaves of their sensual appetites. Others grow contentious and quarrelsome, are often angry with those around them, and cherish habitual rancor against them in their hearts. They become willful and obstinate, and stir up strife, and oppose others with vehemence; determining at all hazards to carry their own measures, and delighting to have those who oppose them defeated and humbled. It hurts them to have others prosper. Their minds and hearts are full of turmoil, and heat, and vehemence against one and another. Others fall into a discontented, fretful, and impatient frame at the disposals of Providence. And oftentimes many of these things go together. And as these persons sink into such unhappy frames in their hearts, so they pursue very sinful courses of conduct. They behave themselves unsuitably, so as to dishonor God, and greatly to wound religion. They do not appear to others to savor of a good spirit. They fall

into the practice of allowing themselves too great liberties in indulging their sensual appetites, in the gratification of covetousness and pride, in strife, backbiting, and a violent pursuit after the world. They slide into those corrupt frames and evil ways commonly by means of their first giving way to a slothful spirit. They are not so diligent and earnest in religion as they once were; but indulge their slothful disposition, and discontinue their watch, and so lie open to temptation. Thus ill frames imperceptibly creep upon them, and they insensibly more and more fall into sinful practices. So it was with David. Their sin, into which they fall in consequence of this degenerate and sinful state of the affections and the life, is the occasion of a great deal of darkness. God withdraws his Spirit from them, their light goes out, and the evidences of their piety grow dim and obscure. They seem to be in a great measure as they were before they were converted, and they have no sensible communion with God. Thus sin is the occasion of trouble and darkness to the Christian.

Third, when it is thus with Christians, their trouble is commonly greatly increased a little before the renewal of hope and comfort. When sin prevails, as has been said, in the hearts of Christians, they are not wont to be easy and quiet like secure sinners. There is commonly more or less of an inward struggling and uneasiness. Grace in the heart, though it be dreadfully oppressed, and, as it were, overwhelmed, yet will be resisting its enemy and struggling for liberty. So that it is not with Christians in their ill frames, and under the prevalence of corruption, altogether as it is with carnal, wicked men who are secure. And there is this good reason for it, that the former have a principle of spiritual life in their souls, which the latter have not. Yet Christians in their ill frames may fall into a great deal of security and senselessness; for sin is of a stupefying nature, and wherever it prevails, will have more or less of that effect. When they fall into a sinful, worldly, proud, or contentious frame, they are wont to have a great degree of senselessness and stupidity with it. And especially when they fall into gross sins, has it a tendency greatly to stupefy the soul. It obviously had this effect on David. He seems to have been strangely stupefied, when Nathan came to him with the parable of the rich man, who injuriously took the poor man's ewe lamb from him. He was enraged with the man in the parable, but did not seem to reflect on himself, or think how parallel his case was with his. And while they are thus

senseless, their trouble is not so great; and if they feel the weight of sin it is not so burdensome to them. But God is wont, before he renews comfort and hope to them, to bring them into greater trouble. As a sinner before his first comfort in his conversion is brought into trouble, so it is wont to be with the saints after their backslidings and decays, before renewed hope and comfort is granted. There is a work of awakening wrought upon them. While they remain in their corrupt frames, they are, as it were, asleep. They are like the ten foolish virgins who slumbered and slept; and as persons who are asleep, they are unconscious, not sensible where they are, nor what are their circumstances. Therefore when God is coming and returning to them by his Spirit, commonly his first work upon them is a work of awakening, to wake them out of sleep, and rouse them to some sensibility, to make them sensible of the great folly of their ways, and how they have displeased and offended God, and what mischief they have done. Thus God leads them into the wilderness, and brings them into the valley of Achor or trouble. Then they are in greater trouble than they were before, and have more sensible darkness, and more distress abundantly. But yet it is really much better with them now, than before they began to come to themselves. Their circumstances are much more eligible and more hopeful, though sometimes they are in distress and almost insupportable. And a little before God renews light and comfort, they have a very great sense of God's anger, and his wrath lies heavy upon them. So it seems to have been with David a little before the restoration of spiritual comfort to him, which made him speak of the bones which God had broken, when he was praying for the renewal of comfort. Psa. 51:8, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." And probably he has respect to the same thing in Psa. 38 which he calls his psalm to bring to remembrance. Verses 2, 3, 4, "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And often when God is about to bring them to themselves, and to restore comfort to them, he first brings them into some very great and sore temporal calamity and trouble, and awakens them by that, and in this first brings them into the wilderness before he speaks comfortably to them. Job 33:16, etc. "Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may

withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones, that were not seen, stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy; for he will render unto man his righteousness. He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Thus those who are very weak in grace sometimes meet with great and sore trouble, both of body and mind, which is an occasion of a new work, as it were, of grace upon their hearts; so that they are more eminent saints afterwards, and have much more comfort.

Fourth, when the saints are in darkness, their darkness is not perpetual, but God will restore hope and comfort to them again. When one of Christ's sheep wanders away, and gets into the wilderness, Christ the good Shepherd will not leave him in the wilderness, but will seek him, and will lay him on his shoulders, and bring him home again. We cannot tell how long God may leave his saints in the dark, but yet surely their darkness shall not last forever; for light is sown to the righteous, and gladness to the upright in heart. Psa. 97:11. God, in the covenant of grace in which they have an interest, has promised them joy and comfort. He has promised them everlasting joy. Isa. 61:7. Satan may be suffered for a time to bring them into darkness, but they shall be brought out again. God may be provoked to hide his face from them for a time; and if it seems long, yet it is indeed but a little time. Isa. 54:7, 8, "For a small moment I have forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting

kindness will I have mercy on thee." Psa. 30:5, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Fifth, hope and comfort are renewed to them on the slaving of the troubler. All sin is truly mortified in conversion, or has its death wounds then. And all the exercises of it afterwards are, in some respects, as the efforts and strugglings of a dying enemy. But yet all life is not actually extinct, and therefore it needs to be further mortified, to receive more deadly wounds. Sin is slain in the godly after trouble and darkness, and before the renewing of comfort, in these three ways:

1. It is slain as to former degrees of it. All remains of corruption are not extirpated. Sin does not cease to be in the heart; but it ceases to be any more in such strength as it has been. It ceases to have that prevalence.

2. It is slain as to former ways of exercise. The former ways of sin are forsaken. They are further afterwards from such ways of sin than ever before. The heart is fortified against them. Thus if a godly man has been in a way of contention and strife, when he comes to himself again, he slays his contention. He kills sin as to that way of exercising it. Or if it be some way of sensuality, when he comes to himself, he will slay his sensuality, and cast it out from him.

3. It is totally and perfectly slain in his will and inclination.

There is that renewed opposition made against it, which implies a mortal inclination and design against it. What the saint seeks when he comes to himself after a time of great declension, is to be the death of sin, which has been so prevalent in him, and perfectly to extirpate it. He acts in what he does as a mortal enemy. And if he does not perfectly destroy it at one blow, it is not for want of inclination, but for want of strength. The godly man does not deal mercifully and tenderly with sin, but as far as in him lies, he deals with it as the children of Israel dealt with Achan, as it were, stones it with stones, and burns it with fire with all which belongs to it. They do not at all spare it, as wicked men do; they aim at the very life, and nothing short of it. The saints' slaying the troubler after great backslidings and ill frames, implies the following things.

(1). There is a conviction of the evil of their sin. They are brought to consideration. They think on their ways before they turn their feet. Psa. 119:59. They consider how they have behaved themselves, how unworthily, how unfaithful they have been to their profession, how ungratefully, and disagreeably to the mercies they have received. They consider how they have provoked God, and have deserved his wrath. They find the troubler led them to see a great deal more of the sinfulness and corruption of their hearts commonly than before. In this respect the work of God with saints after great declinings is agreeable to his work in the heart of a natural man in order to his conversion.

(2). There is a gracious humiliation of soul before God for it. The gracious soul, when convinced of sin after great declensions, and recovered out of them, is deeply humbled; for it is brought to the dust before God. There is an evangelical repentance. The heart is broken for sin. That sacrifice is offered to God, which David offered rather than burnt offerings after his great fall. Psa. 51:16, 17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." They are brought as Job was, after he had sinned, in complaining of God's dealings with him, to abhor themselves. Job 42:6. And they are in a meeker frame, as the Christian Corinthians were, after they had greatly gone out of the way, and had been reproved by the apostle Paul. 2 Cor. 7:11, "For behold the self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge." They were filled with sorrow, and with a kind of indignation, zeal, and spirit of revenge against themselves for their folly, and so ungratefully treating God. When Christians are convinced of their sin after remarkable miscarriages and ill frames, they are commonly convinced of many of the same things of which they were convinced under their first humiliation, but to a greater degree than ever before. They are brought to a new conviction, and a greater conviction than ever before, of their own emptiness, and to be sensible what poor, feeble, helpless creatures, and what sinful, vile, utterly unworthy creatures, they are; how undeserving they are of any mercy, and how much they deserve God's wrath. And this conviction

works by a gracious humbling of the soul. The grace of humility is greatly increased by it, and very commonly they are more poor in spirit and lowly of heart during all their future life. They see more what cause there is for them to lay their hands on their mouths, and to walk humbly with God, and lie low before him.

(3). There is a renewed application to Christ as a Savior from sin.

There is a renewed act of reliance on him for justification, of faith in his blood to cleanse them, and of trust in his righteousness to cover their nakedness and filthiness. And Christ as a Savior becomes more precious to them. As they have a greater sense of their own emptiness and vileness, so they have a more entire dependence on Christ's fullness.

(4). The heart is farther separated from those ways of sin, and more confirmed against them, than ever. After it they commonly have a greater dread of it, and greater abhorrence, look upon it more as an enemy, and remember what they have suffered from it; and their hearts are more confirmed against it than ever. They have stronger resolutions to all which savors of the like, and all which might lead to it. Therefore this is mentioned among the effects of the repentance of the Corinthians after their going astray. "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what fear, yea what earnest desire." There was a more than ordinary fear and dread of the like sin for the future, and more carefulness to shun it, and a more earnest desire of the contrary. The work of God in the heart of a saint after declension oftentimes, in many respects, resembles the work of God in a sinner at his conversion; though it is not in all respects like it, because of the great difference in the subject. When the troubler comes to be thus slain after times of trouble and darkness in the godly, then God is wont to open a door of hope. The darkness which has covered them, which was greatest a little before, is now scattered, and light arises. It may be before there had been a long night of clouds and darkness. But now the clouds begin to scatter, and the sweet refreshing beams begin to break forth, and come down into the heart. The soul, which has been wounded, is now healed. God pours in the oil of comfort. The renewed sense, which is given, of Christ's fullness and sufficiency, gives new life and hope and joy. The troubler being slain, God now grants renewed discoveries of his glory, and renewed

manifestations of his grace. And the soul, which was before in darkness, is now entertained with sweet views. And now that hope, which was so weakened, and was almost ready to fail, is revived, and greatly confirmed. Now the soul is enabled to take comfort in the promises. Now the saint sees evidences of his own good estate by the renewed manifestations which God makes of himself, and renewed exercises of grace. Before the soul was greatly exercised with doubts and fears and dark clouds; and much time was spent in reviewing past experiences, and looking over and examining those things which were formerly regarded as evidences of piety; and all in vain. They pored on past experiences, but to no satisfaction. And the reason was, the troubler was not slain, but still remained alive. But now God gives them new light, and new experiences, which in a few moments do more towards scattering their clouds, and removing their fears, than all their poring on past experiences could do for months, and probably for years. Before their hearts seemed in a great measure dead as to spiritual exercises. But now there is, as it were, new life. Now when they read the Scripture, and when they hear the Word preached, it is with a savor and relish of it. Now they can find God in his word and ordinances. Now Christ comes to them, and manifests himself to them, and they are admitted again to communion with God. When Christians have comfort and hope thus renewed, their comforts are commonly purer than ever. Their joys are more humble joys, freer from any mixture and taint of self-righteousness, than before.

Having thus shown that God is wont to cause hope and comfort to arise to the soul after trouble and humbling for sin, and upon slaving the troubler, both at first conversion and afterwards, after sad declinings, I would now give the reasons of the doctrine.

I. I would show why God is wont to give comfort after trouble and humbling for sin; or why he is wont to bring the soul into the wilderness before he speaks comfortably to it, and leads it into the valley of Achor, before he opens a door of hope.

First, it is that the soul may be prepared for a confiding application of itself to Christ for comfort. It is the will of God that men should have true hope and comfort conferred upon them in no other way, than by Jesus Christ. It is only by him that sinners have comfort at their conversion.

And it is by him only that the saints have renewed hope and comfort after their declensions. And therefore the way to obtain this comfort is to look to him, to fly for refuge to him. And in order to this, persons have need to be brought to a sense of their necessity of him. And that they may be so, it is needful that they should be sensible of their calamity and misery, that they should be in trouble, and be brought to see their utter helplessness in themselves. And not only natural men, but Christians also, who are fallen into sin, and are in a dead and senseless frame, need something to make them more sensible of their necessity of Christ. Indeed the best are not so sensible of their need of Christ but that they need to be made more sensible. But especially those who are in ill and dead frames, and a declining state, need trouble and humbling to make them sensible of their need of Christ, and to prepare their minds for a renewed confiding application to Christ as their only remedy. The godly in such a case are sick with a sore disease, and Christ is the only Physician who can heal them; and they need to be sensible of their disease, that they may see their need of a physician. They, as well as natural men, need to be in a storm and tempest to make them sensible of their need to fly to him who is a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. A Christian, who wanders away from God, is like Noah's dove, which flew from the ark. She flew about till weary and spent, seeking rest somewhere else, but found no rest for the sole of her foot, and then she returned to the ark. So it is needful that the soul of a godly man, who wanders from Christ, should become weary, and find no rest for the sole of his foot, that so he may see his need of returning to Christ. Therefore it is said concerning the children of Israel in Hos. 2:6, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up they way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths." And in our context, "She shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." When gracious souls wander from Christ, their husband, following after other lovers, God is wont to bring them into trouble and distress, and make them see, that their other lovers cannot help them, that so they may see, that it is best for them to return to their first husband.

Second, another end of God in it is, that comfort and hope may be the

more prized when obtained. We see in temporal things, that the worth and value of any enjoyment is learned by the want of it. He who is sick, knows the worth of health. He who is in pain, knows how to prize ease. He who is in a storm at sea, knows how to prize safety on shore. And people who are subject to the grievances of war, know how to value peace. He who endures the hardships of captivity and slavery, is thereby taught how to value liberty. And so it is in spiritual things. He who is brought to see his misery in being without hope, is prepared to prize hope when obtained. He who is brought into distress through fear of hell and God's wrath, is the more prepared to prize the comfort which arises from the manifestation of the favor of God, and a sense of safety from hell. He who is brought to see his utter emptiness and extreme poverty and necessity, and his perishing condition on that account, is thoroughly prepared to prize and rejoice in the manifestation of a fullness in Christ. And those godly persons who are fallen into corrupt and senseless frames, greatly stand in need of something to make them more sensible of their want of spiritual comfort and hope. Their living as they do shows that they have too little sense of the worth and value of that comfort, and those inestimable spiritual and saving blessings, which God has bestowed upon them. Otherwise they never would deal so ungratefully with God, who has bestowed them. If they did not greatly err in slighting spiritual comfort, as the children of Israel did manna, their hearts would never, to such a degree, have gone out after vanity, and earthly enjoyments, and carnal delights. They need to be brought into trouble and darkness to make them sensible of the worth of hope and comfort, and to teach them to prize it. They need to be brought into the wilderness, and left for a time to wander and suffer hunger and thirst in a barren desert, to teach them how to prize their vineyards. A sense of the pardon of sin, and the favor of God, and a hope of eternal life, do not afford comfort and joy to the soul any farther than they are valued and prized. So that the trouble and darkness which go before comfort, serve to render the joy and comfort the greater when obtained, and so are in mercy to those for whom God intends comfort.

Third, it is so ordered that divine power and grace may be acknowledged in giving hope and comfort. There is naturally in men an exceeding insensibility of their dependence on God, and a great disposition to

ascribe those things which they enjoy to themselves, or to second causes. This disposition reigns in natural men. They are wholly under the power of it. Therefore they need to be taught their own helplessness, and utter insufficiency, and utter unworthiness. Otherwise, if hope and comfort should be bestowed upon them, they would surely ascribe all to themselves, or the creature, and so would be lifted up by it, and would not give God the glory. Therefore it is God's manner first to humble sinners before he comforts them. And all this self-confident disposition is not extirpated out of the hearts of the godly, and especially when they get into ill frames does it prevail. And it is very requisite, that before any remarkable comfort is bestowed upon them, they should be the subjects of renewed humbling. They need renewedly to see what helpless creatures they are, that so , when light is bestowed, they may be sensible how it is owing to God, and not to themselves, or any other. And that they may, by their troubles and humblings, be prepared the more to admire God's power and mercy, and free and rich grace to them. While men are continued in fullness in a fruitful land, they will not learn their own helplessness; and therefore God will cast them out of this fullness into a wilderness. This is plainly intimated to be the reason of God's so dealing with the children of Israel, as is said in the text. The church of Israel, before God thus led her into the wilderness, did not ascribe her comforts to God, as in the eighth verse, "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold." But they ascribed them to her idols. Verse fifth, "For she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." And verse twelfth, "These are my rewards, that my lovers have given me." For this reason it is that God takes away those things, as in verse ninth, "Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." And verses 11, 12, "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them." God took them away, and turned her vineyards into a forest, and made her sensible that they were from him; and then he restored them again. For these reasons God is wont to bring souls into trouble, and to

humble them for sin before he comforts them. I proceed.

II. To give the reasons why hope and comfort are not obtained till sin, which is the troubler, is slain.

First, while sin is harbored and preserved alive, it tends to provoke God to frown and express his anger. Sin is God's mortal enemy. It is that which his soul infinitely hates, and to which he is an irreconcilable enemy. And therefore if we harbor this and suffer it to live in our hearts, and to govern our practice, we can expect no other than that it will provoke God's frowns. Spiritual comfort consists in the manifestation of God's favor, and in friendly communion with God. But how can we expect this at the same time that we harbor his mortal enemy? We see what God said to Joshua, while Achan was alive. Jos. 7:12, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you."

Second, the natural tendency of sin is to darken the mind, and trouble the conscience. There is nothing which wounds a well-informed conscience but sin. Sin is the enemy of grace, and therefore the natural tendency of it is to oppose and keep down the exercises of grace, and so to extinguish spiritual comfort; for spiritual comfort comes in no other way than by the exercise of grace. That which prevents the exercises of grace darkens the evidences of a man's good estate. For there are no evidences of this but the exercises of grace. Sin does as much tend to keep out spiritual comfort, as clouds tend to hide the light of the sun. And therefore it is necessary that this should be removed in order to our receiving light and comfort. It is impossible in its own nature that any should have spiritual light and comfort before sin is mortified. If sinners had comfort while sin is in reigning power, it could be spiritual comfort; for spiritual comfort is the same with gracious comfort. But how can there be gracious comfort where grace has no place? But if there be grace, sin will not be in reigning power; for the nature of grace is to mortify sin. And as there can be no spiritual comfort without a degree of mortification of sin in those in whom sin is mortified, spiritual comfort cannot be any more than in proportion as sin is mortified.

Third, a hope of eternal life, if given before the slaying of sin, would be misimproved and abused. If it were possible that a sinner could obtain a

title to eternal life before sin was mortified, and so could have his own safety and God's favor manifested to him, he would only improve it to encourage and embolden himself in sin. Hope, if they had it then, would have a pernicious influence and tendency. Till sin is slain, they stand in need of fear to restrain sin. If fear were once gone before sin is slain, they would soon run into all manner of wickedness, and without restraint. And so Christians themselves, while they are in corrupt frames, stand in need of fear to restrain sin; for at such times love is in a great degree dormant. It is of necessity that persons should have some principle or other to restrain them from sin. But there is no principle which can be effectual to restrain men from sin any farther than it is in exercise. If love is not in exercise it will not restrain men. So that at such times the saints need fear. And therefore God has wisely ordered it, that at such times their evidences should be darkened and their hopes clouded, that they may have fear, when love is not awake, to restrain them. The godly themselves, if their hope were all alive at those times when they are in carnal and thoughtless frames, and grace is asleep, would be in great danger to abuse their hope, and taken encouragement from it to indulge their lusts, or at least, to be the less careful to restrain and resist them. For we see that in such frames, though their hopes are clouded, and they have a considerable degree of fear, yet they are careless and negligent. But how much more so would they be, if they had no fear to restrain them!

APPLICATION

I. Use of instruction.

First, hence we may observe the wonderful wisdom of God in his dealings with the souls of men. When we consider what has been said, with the reasons of it, we may see just cause to admire the divine wisdom in his ordinary dealings with respect to those for whom he intends comfort. His wisdom is admirable in his dealing with natural men in fitting and preparing them for comfort, in bringing them into such troubles and distress, and hedging up their way with thorns, as it is expressed in the context, and leaving them in their distress to follow after their lovers, their idols, without being able to overtake them; in taking away their vineyards, and all those things in which they trusted, and making them a

forest; and so showing them what poor, destitute, helpless creatures they are, before he gives them comfort. And so we may well admire the divine wisdom in his method of dealing with his saints, who decline and fall into sin, or get into corrupt frames and ill ways. God knows how to order things concerning them; and there is a marvelous wisdom observable in his manner of dealing with them in such cases. We may well admire how wisely God orders things in what has been said, for his own glory, to secure the glory due to his power and free grace, and to bring men to a sense of their dependence on him, and to ascribe all to him. And how he orders things for the glory of his Son, that he may have all the glory of the salvation of men, who is worthy of it, in that he laid down his life for their salvation. And also how wisely God orders things for the good of his own elect people, how he brings good out of evil, and light out of darkness. How wisely he consults their good and comfort in those things, which appear to them to be most against them. How he wisely prepares them for good, and makes way for their receiving comfort, and for its being the more sweet, the more prized and delighted in, when it is obtained. And oftentimes in bringing about this in those things, which they think at the time to be signs of God's hatred. And how wisely God orders things for preventing men's abusing a sense of their own safety, to giving the reins to their lusts. It is ordered so, that at those times when sin prevails, and there would be danger of this, the evidences of their safety are hid from their eyes, and the fear of hell comes on to keep them in awe; and that hope and comfort should be given only at such times and in such manner that they should have influence to draw men off from sin, and to prompt them to diligence in duty and the service of God; and that when it would have most of this tendency, then they should have most of it. When we consider these things, we may well cry out with the apostle, "O, the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Second, hence we may learn, that souls, who are in darkness, and as it were, in a wilderness, have no cause to be discouraged. For by the doctrine we learn that this is the way often, in order to hope and comfort. Persons are very often ready to be discouraged by this. God seems to frown. They have a sense of his anger. They cry to him, and he does not seem to hear their prayers. They have been striving for relief, but it seems

to be to no purpose. They are in such circumstances, that everything looks dark; everything seems to be against them. They are lost in a wilderness. They cannot find the way out. They have gone round and round, and returned again to the same place. They know not which way to turn themselves, or what to do. Their hearts are ready to sink. But you may gather encouragement from this doctrine; for by it you may learn that you have no cause to despair. For it is frequently God's manner to bring persons into such circumstances, in order to prepare them for hope and comfort. The children of Israel were ready to be discouraged at the Red sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his hosts pursuing them. But it was only to prepare them for the greater joy after their deliverance. Joshua and the hosts of Israel were ready to be discouraged when they were smitten at Ai, as you may see in Jos. 7:5, etc. So that you, who are in the wilderness, may take encouragement from hence, still earnestly to seek God, and hope for light and comfort in his time.

II. Use of self-examination. By this persons may try their hopes and comforts, whether they are of the right kind. If they are such as have arisen after the manner, as is spoken of in the doctrine; if it is a hope which you found in the valley of Achor, in the sense which has been explained; it is a sign that it is a hope which God has given you, and so a hope which you are not to cast away; but which you are to retain, and rejoice in, and bless God for it. Therefore particularly inquire concerning your hopes and comforts, whether they have arisen in your souls when humbled for sin, and in the slaying of sin.

First, inquire whether your hopes and comforts have been given you upon your soul's being humbled for sin. You may try this by three things.

1. Whether you have seen what a miserable, helpless creature you were. When your hopes and comforts have arisen in your heart, has it been upon your soul's receiving such a sight of yourself. Or has your hope been accompanied with such a sense of soul? When hope was given at first, was it implanted in a heart thus prepared? And when you have had remarkable comfort and joy from time to time, has your joy been accompanied with such a sense and frame of mind? At the same time that you have had a strong hope of God's favor, and that Christ was yours, have you been nothing in your own eyes. Have you at such times

appeared to yourself to be a poor, little, helpless, unworthy creature, deserving nothing at the hands of God? And do not only inquire whether in your own apprehension you had some such sight of yourself at first, before your first comfort. If you ever had a right understanding of yourself, of your own heart, and your own state, you will never wholly lose it. It will revive from time to time. If you had it when you received your first comfort, the same sense will come again. When your comforts are revived, this will revive with them. If the first joy was granted to a heart thus prepared, there will from time to time be a sense of your own emptiness and worthlessness, arising with your joys and comforts. It will be with a deep sense of what a poor, miserable, and exceedingly sinful creature you are. True comfort is wont to come in such a manner. There is usually a self-emptying, a soul-abasing, sense of heart accompanying it. So that at the same time that God lifts up the soul with comfort, and joy, and inward sweetness, he casts it down with abasement. Evangelical and gracious humiliation and spiritual comfort are companions, which go one with the other, and keep company together. When one comes, the other is wont to come with it. It is not wont to be so with false comforts and joys. But pride and self-fullness are wont to be the companions of false comfort. Indeed, there may be a counterfeit abasement going with it. But if you examine it, you will find, that that very seeming abasement or humiliation lifts the man up, and fills him full of himself. The hypocrite, in the times of his greatest joy, and most confident hopes, looks large in himself. His thoughts are very busily employed about his own excellencies, how holy he is, how eminent a saint he is, how much better he is than most of his neighbors, how there are few equal to him; and therefore how it must be that God loves him better than most others; how much God distinguishes him, how much he experiences, and how good he is, and what delight he takes in them on that account.

But true spiritual comfort works in another way. Gracious joy and poverty of spirit go hand in hand, and rejoice, as it were, in each other's company. The godly may at some times have comforts and joys, which do not accompany such abasement. They may be lifted up with joy and conceit of, and confidence in, themselves at the same time. But those joys are not spiritual, they are hypocritical, joys. Such comforts are not from the Spirit of God. A godly man may have false joys. He is liable to this exercise of

corruption, as well as others. And there may be a mixture of one with the other, or false joy and pride may take occasion from true ones, afterwards to appear. But a gracious joy is linked together with poverty of spirit, and never forsakes it. And hence,

2. You may try this by examining what your hopes and comforts are built upon; whether on Christ only, or on your own righteousness. If you would know of what kind your comforts are, follow them up to the fountain, and see what is their source and spring. If you would know of what kind your hope is, examine the bottom of it, and see upon what foundation it stands. If your hope is that which has been given in the valley of Achor, your own righteousness is not the foundation of it. Inquire therefore what it is, which gives you ease with respect to your past sins, what it is which quiets your conscience about them. Is it any sense you have of the free, and sovereign, and infinite grace and mercy of God in Christ? Is it what you have seen in Christ, or the gospel of his grace, which has lightened your burden with respect to your sins? Or is that now you think with yourself that you have done such and such things, or have met with such things, have such workings of affection towards God, that you are become lovely in his sight, so that he, seeing what holy affections and experiences your heart has been filled with, and what discoveries you have had, he is on that account reconciled to you, and you are become lovely in his eyes? What makes you hope that you are in favor with God? Is it because you conceive of God as looking down from heaven upon your heart, on your gracious experiences, and so being, as it were, taken with, and receiving you into his favor on account of that? Or is your hope of God's favor built on a sense which you have of Christ's worthiness, and the saving mercy of God in him, and his faithfulness to the promises, which he has made through him?

3. Inquire concerning the effect of your comforts, whether they cause an ardent disposition and desire to exalt God, and to lie low before him. True comforts and joys, which are from the Spirit of God, and are well founded, are wont to work after this manner. They excite an inward intense desire that God may be exalted, and to lie in the dust. Such a one as the psalmist seems to have had, when he says, Psa. 115:1, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." The repeating of the

expression seems to show how ardent his heart was. When God is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon the soul, and to impart inward sweetness from a manifestation of his glory, there is wont to be an inward longing to be in the dust. At such times the Christian sees how it becomes him to be humble, and how worthy God and Christ are of all the glory, more than he does at other times. He perceives and laments that he cannot bow enough; that he is not abased as low before God as becomes such a sinner as himself. Hence arises an intense desire after self-abasement; and the soul breathes and pants after humiliation before God.

Second, inquire whether your hope and comfort are such as have arisen on the slaying of sin. If your hope is that which you obtained before this, you obtained it too soon, and had better be without it than with it. It is not sufficient evidence of your hope, that it was given after much trouble and great terrors, or great relentings of heart for sin, and bewailing that you had done so wickedly, or that it was after reformations, and abstaining from former ways of sin, and a total reformation of some particular evil practices. But if it be a true hope, it was given after the slaying of sin. And in order the better to determine this point, let the following inquiries be made.

1. Whether your hope has been accompanied with a heart and a life turned from sin? Or is there no remarkable difference in this respect now from what there was before? We all own conversion to be a great change. And we have all been sufficiently taught, that the change consists in this; in turning from sin to God. Therefore there must be a great change in this respect. Is there a great change in this respect in you? I do not inquire whether there be a great change in you in respect to hope and comfort; that whereas formerly you did not suppose yourself to be in Christ, and had no hope of it, now you have hope, and a confident hope, which oftentimes is an occasion of new and peculiar joy and elevation of spirit. There may be a great change in you in this respect, and yet you may remain in a Christless state. But is there a great change with respect to the turning of your heart from sin, and against sin? You may reply to this, I see abundance of corruption and wickedness in my heart; and so far is it from being delivered from corruption, that I seem at times to discover more than ever. But whether you see more or less corruption in your

heart, is your heart turned against the corruption which you see? Is there a great difference in you in this respect from what there used to be with respect to your being turned against your own sin, and finding within yourself a nature opposite to it, a nature to resist it, to carry it as an uneasy burden? And is your heart turned against yourself for it, in abhorrence of yourself, and in indignation against yourself? And is your will turned from sin, that though you find a great deal of corruption in your heart, yet you do not allow it, you keep a strict watch upon it, and will not let it walk at liberty to appear in your life and conversation? Is there no lust harbored, which is prevalent in you, and which is neglected, and suffered to range and to walk on every side? Is there no sin wittingly tolerated? Do you aim strictly to keep all God's commandments; and is that your actual care and watch, that you may avoid every evil, and every false way; and that you may in all things, so far as in you lies, please and honor God? And do you find that this is the tendency of your hope; that your hope has a sanctifying influence upon you, that it turns you against sin, and stirs you up to seek after purity from sin? With respect to most who are here present, who entertain hope, there has been much opportunity for experience in this matter, since you have had your hope, so that one would think by an impartial and strict examination you might be able to answer these inquiries.

2. Those of you, who have obtained your hope again after special and remarkable departings from God, should inquire in what manner hope has been restored. Indeed hypocrites are not so apt to have their hope abated by such things, as those who have a true hope. A hypocrite's hopes and false comforts will subsist, and it may be continue as lively as ever, under such great sins, and such a course of ill practices, as, if a godly man should fall into them, would bring him into exceeding darkness. Some hypocrites will live in very immoral ways, and yet keep up their confidence, seem not to have their hope much shaken, and boast of as much comfort and joy at such times as at any other. But this is not the manner of a true comfort. A true comfort, which flows from the exercise and the breathings of the Spirit of God in the heart, must, of necessity, at such times be exceedingly suppressed; and commonly great trouble and darkness is the effect. But if it has not been altogether thus with you, but you have found that at times, when you have greatly sinned and gone on

in ill practices, your hope has decayed, and in the time of it your conscience told you that the way in which you lived was contrary to known rules, and so was in doubt about your hope, but since that you have grown strong again in your hope, inquire in what manner you have obtained your hope again. Unsound professors in such cases are not wont to obtain hope again in the same manner as the truly godly do, in a deep humbling for sin, and in slaying the troubler, as has been described. But it may be only this, that now they do better than they did, and so hope comes again. If they lived in a way of some vile sensuality for a time, and afterwards cease to do so, they look on their reformation as an atonement; and so their hope is renewed without any humbling or abasement, without any special convictions of the evil of their ways, any special repentance, or renewed sense of their own vileness, or any renewed flying to the mercy of God in Christ for refuge, or any further alienation of their hearts from those evil ways in which they have walked. If your comforts and confidence have been renewed after remarkable aberrations from the way of duty without something of this nature, it is to be feared that you make your own righteousness the ground of your hope and comfort.

3. Inquire whether at those times, when you have most hope and comfort, above all others, you are most disposed to be careful to avoid sin, and to strive to live holy. Sometimes the hope of hypocrites if very confident; and therefore the degree of confidence which attends a hope is not certain evidence of its truth and genuineness. But we should examine what effect this strong confidence has upon us. Do we find, when our hope is strongest and our comfort greatest, that then our hearts are most set against sin, and that then we feel the greatest desires to live holy, and have most of a disposition to keep a strict watch, and maintain an earnest warfare against sin, and are most desirous in everything to do our duty? Or do we find, on the contrary, when our hope is strong, and we are most satisfied that our condition is safe, that then we are least careful to avoid sin, and are least disposed to take pains to curb our lusts, and resist temptation, or lay ourselves in the way of duty? If it be thus, it is a very bad sign and black mark on our hopes and comforts. A true hope has a tendency to prompt him who has it to purify himself, and watch and strive more earnestly against all impurity. 1 John 3:3, “He that hath this

hope in him purifieth himself." They are condemned who, because they think they are righteous, and so that they shall certainly have eternal life, will trust in that hope to give themselves the greater liberty in sin. Eze. 33:13, "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remember; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die."

III. Use of direction. If it be so, that God is wont to cause hope and comfort to arise after trouble and humbling for sin, and upon slaying the troubler, this may be of direction to souls under spiritual trouble and darkness, what course to pursue for hope and comfort.

First, thoroughly to renounce and forsake all ways of sinful behavior. For you have heard that hope and comfort are never to be expected, till sin is slain or forsaken. He who is not thorough in his reformation, cannot reasonably hope for comfort, how much soever he may abound in some particular duties. Persons who are under awakenings, and would seek a true hope of salvation, should in the first place see, that they thoroughly renounce every wicked practice. They should search their ways, and consider what is wrong in them: what duties they have omitted, which ought to have been done; and what practices they have allowed, which ought to be forsaken. And [they] should immediately reform, retaining no one way of sin, denying all ungodliness, omitting nothing which is required; and should see that they persevere in it, that it be not merely a temporary, short-lived restraint, but an everlasting renunciation. This is the way to have the troubler slain.

Second, earnestly to seek humiliation. To that end they should labor to be convinced of sin. They should be much engaged in searching their own hearts, and keeping a watchful eye upon them. They should not rest in their own efforts, but earnestly seek to God to give them a right sight of themselves, and a right conviction of sin, and show them that they have deserved God's everlasting wrath. And in order to this they should carefully watch against backsliding; for backsliding prevents humiliation. If there has been any progress made by the conviction of God's Spirit

towards it, it is all lost by backsliding. This again blinds and stupefies the heart, and sets the man further than ever from a right knowledge of himself, and sight of his own heart.

Third, to search and endeavor to find out the troubler. You have heard that when the godly are in darkness, it is not for want of love in God to them, or a readiness in him to give them comfort; but that sin is doubtless the cause of their darkness in one way or another. Their troubler lies at their own door. There is doubtless some troubler in the camp, which causes God to withdraw. And therefore if you have light revive, and have the comfortable presence of God again, the first thing which you do must be to search, and find out the troubler. Many, when they are in darkness, proceed in a wrong way. They go to examining past experience. And that they should do; but what is wrong in it is, that they do that only. They spend their time in seeking for something in themselves which is good. Whereas they ought to spend more of it in seeking out that which is bad. Whatever good there is, they are never likely to find it out, till they find out the sin which obscures and hides it. And whatever they reflect upon, which they formerly thought was good, is not likely to afford any satisfaction to them, till that bad thing be removed out of the way which troubled them. They wonder what the cause is, that they are so in the dark. They verily thought in time past, that they were right, and that they had experienced a right work of God's Spirit on their hearts, and thought that they were the children of God. But now God hides his face from them, and they wonder what is the matter; as Joshua seemed to be astonished when Israel was smitten down at Ai. Sometimes they almost conclude, that it is because they are not the children of God. They pray to God to renew his comforts to them, and spend much time. And they ought to pray. But they have more need to do something else. Joshua spent a great deal of time in prayer when Israel was troubled. He fell upon his face till eventide, complaining to God about his withdrawing from them. But God says to him. Jos. 7:10, 11, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" As much as to say, you had more need to be doing something else, than lie there. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant, which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing." And verse 13, "Up, sanctify yourselves." This teaches you, who are under darkness, and have your hopes

darkened, and comforts deadened, what you should do. You must arise and search, and find out the troubler. If you do not do this, it will signify nothing to you to lie crying and complaining to God about your darkness. You have other business which you have more need to do, though prayer should not be left undone. Let me beseech you, therefore, to be thorough in this. You have need to be thorough, for it is an exceedingly difficult thing to find out the accursed thing in such cases. Men's hearts do like Achan, who hid the accursed thing in the earth in the midst of his tent. Jos. 7:21. He hid it very closely. He did not content himself with hiding it in the most secret place in his tent, but he dug in the ground and buried it in the earth under his feet, that there might be no sign of it above ground. So are men's deceitful hearts wont to hide the accursed thing which troubles them. When they are put upon searching for the cause of their trouble and darkness, they think of one thing and another, but commonly overlook the chief cause of all their trouble. It does not so much as enter their minds. They search the tent, but that is not enough. They must search the very ground, or they will not find it out. When they tell of their darkness, and are put upon searching to see whether some sinful way is not the cause, they readily own that it is their fault. But yet they mistake the true Achan, not withstanding all they confess of the corruption of their hearts. It is not merely corruption in their hearts, working in their thought, which is the cause; but it is some way of outward sin and wickedness, in which they have of late in a great measure allowed themselves. That is the principal cause of their trouble; some way of pride, or covetousness, or some way of envy, or evil-speaking, or ill will to their neighbors, or self-will, or some other way of unsuitable carriage, which is the chief cause of their darkness. In some respects, it is a great deal easier to find out little sins than greater sins, which causes many to strain at a gnat who swallows a camel. Sins which are common to all, and of which all complain, such as corrupt workings of heart, they are willing to feel that it is no disgrace to have them. And the godly commonly tell of such things, and it does not affright them to see them. But such things as malice, a proud behavior, and many other things which might be mentioned, are disagreeable. They are not willing to see such things in themselves. They therefore call them by good names, and put good constructions on them, and hide them, as Achan did his accursed thing underground. The sin which troubles them most, has greatest possession

of their hearts, and does most blind and prejudice their minds, is passed over. They can soon enough discover and see such things in others, in one of an opposite party, or the like, but they cannot see them in themselves; and so they continue still under darkness. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to find out the troubler. You have need, therefore, to be exceedingly thorough in searching for this matter, and not to spare yourself, or bribe your conscience at all, but labor to be impartial in the search. And to induce you to this, consider what God said to Joshua. Jos. 7:12, "Neither will I be with you any more, unless you destroy the accursed thing from among you." And, therefore,

Fourth, when you have found out the troubler, be sure thoroughly to destroy it. Renounce it with detestation, as a vile serpent that has secretly lain under your head for a long time, and infected you with his poisons time after time, and bit you, when you were asleep, made you sick and filled you with pain, and you knew it not. Would not a man, when he has found out the serpent in such a case, destroy it with indignation, and be forever afterwards thoroughly watchful that he is not caught with such a calamity again? You cannot be too thorough in destroying such an enemy, and laboring to root it out, and extirpate all its race. Whoever of you are under darkness and trouble, I am bold to say, if God help you to follow these directions, your darkness will soon be scattered, and hope and comfort will arise. And this is the surest, and readiest, and most direct course which any of you can take in order to the renewing of comfort in your soul. And without this, do not promise yourself any considerable degree of light or comfort while you live, however many examinations of past experiences and prayers to God for light you may make.

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A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." **[Matthew 16:17]**

Christ says these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, who men said he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. When they had thus given an account who others said he was, Christ asks them, who they said he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: he readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does *to* him, and *of* him in the text: in which we may observe,

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account. *Blessed art thou* -- "Thou art a happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am *Christ, the Son of the living God*. Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another; but none of them thinking right, all of them misled. Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter." 2. The evidence of this his happiness declared; *viz.*, that God, and he *only*, had *revealed it* to him. This is an evidence of his being *blessed.*

First, As it shows how peculiarly favored he was of God above others;

q.d., "How highly favored art thou, that others that are wise and great men, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers, and the nation in general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my Heavenly Father should thus set his love, on *thee, Simon Bar-jona*. This argues thee *blessed*, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

Secondly, It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that *flesh* and *blood* can *reveal*. "This is such knowledge as only my *Father which is in heaven* can give: it is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge is. Thou art *blessed*, that thou knowest that which God alone can teach thee."

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. *Positively*, as God is here declared the author of it. *Negatively*, as it is declared, that *flesh and blood* had *not revealed it*. God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of the knowledge that is obtained by human learning: he is the author of all moral prudence, and of the knowledge and skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were *wise-hearted*, and skilled in embroidering, that God had *filled* them *with the spirit of wisdom*, Exodus 28:3.

God is the author of such knowledge; but yet not so but that *flesh and blood reveals it*. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. God is the author of such knowledge by those means: *flesh and blood* is employed as the *mediate* or *second* cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means. But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: he *reveals it*, and *flesh and blood reveals it not*. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, and divided and

confounded in their opinions of him: but Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the *Son of God*. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not *flesh and blood* that had *revealed it to him*, but God: for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means, how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater knowledge and sagacity in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse from these words, is this

DOCTRINE

That there is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.--And on this subject I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

III. Show the truth of the doctrine.
And then conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it, would show,

***First*, In a few things what it is not. And here,**

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men in a natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from light or sensibleness of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of

an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin: but yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing any thing above nature. The light that is obtained is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained if men were left wholly to themselves: or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will, by mere nature, make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves: he helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thence forward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of, as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may indeed act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them; for

notwithstanding all his influences that they may be the subjects of, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, *the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, as upon an external object. But as he acts in his holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw any thing with the bodily eyes: it is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceeding different thing from it. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

3. This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God. This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelation of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration: it reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of the things of religion that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story: he may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it: yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic description of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And that common belief of the truth of the things of religion, that persons may have from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this: one man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance: but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them. -- But I proceed to show,

***Secondly*, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.**

And it may be thus described: a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and

reality of them thence arising. This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, *viz.*, a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, *viz.*, that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness, and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart: as when there is a sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, are mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy

and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

2. There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them; and that either directly or indirectly.

***First*, Indirectly, and that two ways.**

1. As the prejudices that are in the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptive of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against the truth of divine things: it is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the

Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2. It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions the more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with the fixedness and intenseness to that kind of objects; which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, than he that sees them in a dim starlight or twilight.

The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty and sweetness of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises: so that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion. -- But,

Secondly, A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is a human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate

evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them; i.e., they see a divine, and transcendent, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truth of religion as this, arising, these ways, from a sense of the divine excellency of them, is that true spiritual conviction that there is in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, which unregenerate men are capable of.

II. I proceed now to the *second* thing proposed, *viz.*, to show how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means. And here,

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not made use of in it. The natural faculties are the subject of this light: and they are the subject in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man's understanding are concemed and made use of in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, or as a rational creature; and makes use of his human faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; though the faculties are made use of, it is as the subject and not as the cause; and that acting of the faculties in it, is not the cause, but is either implied in the thing itself (in the light that is imparted) or is the consequence of it. As the use that we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. As I have observed already, it is not in this affair, as it is in inspiration, where new truths are suggested: for here is by this light only given a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the word of God; and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is made use of in this affair: this light is the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ", 2 Cor. 4:4. The gospel is as a glass by which this light is conveyed to us, 1 Cor. 13:12. "Now we see through a glass." -- But,

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power, or a natural force God makes use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: and this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit. -- I come now,

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would show briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

***First*, It is scriptural.** My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine that the Scripture abounds in. We are there abundantly taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this, that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few texts of many. 1 John 3:6, "Whosoever sinneth, has not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11, "He that doth good, is of God: but he that doth evil, hath not seen God." John 14:19, "The world seeth me no

more; but ye see me." John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as a seeing and knowing, wherein they differ from the ungodly. And by these Scriptures it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects; but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God, Matt. 11:25-27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed alone to the arbitrary operation, and gift of God, bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it, that have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And the imparting of the knowledge of God is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: and also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that it is the immediate effect of his power and will; for it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation; and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen in that. Gal. 1:15,16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The Scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described, as the immediate gift of God, Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What could the Psalmist mean when he

begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? and what could he mean by those wondrous things? Was it the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these strange things when he would? Doubtless by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections, and glory, that there was in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the Scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God, Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is also what the Scripture teaches. As John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. and John 17:6,7,8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John 12:44,45,46, "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." Their believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are spoken of as running parallel.

Christ condemns the Jews that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing

taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke 12:56,57. He having there blamed the Jews, that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times; or as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times; he adds, yea, and why even of your own selves, judge ye not what is right? i.e., without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine? Why have ye not that savor of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine?

The Apostle Peter mentions it as what gave them (the apostles) good and well grounded assurance of the truth of the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration: that glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly showing his divinity, as his outward glory, and a great deal more: for his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration showed him to be divine, only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have been an eyewitness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen. -- But this brings me to what was proposed next, *viz.*, to show that,

***Secondly*, This doctrine is rational.**

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things, that is so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that, if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine, that appertain

to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is that godlike, high and glorious excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, *viz.*, divine. What reason can be offered against it? Unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his transfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in the glory that he now appears in, as he will do at the day of judgment; without doubt, the glory and majesty that he would appear in, would be such as would satisfy every one that he was a divine person, and that religion was true: and it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel, that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world, there should be something in his word or speech vastly different from man's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had noticed that he was about to do it; that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, in divine speeches or discourses, as it were from his own mouth, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from man's speech, that he should speak like a God; that is, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his speech or word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty and other divine perfections, that the word of man, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in every thing he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more, is the speech of God (if there be any such thing as the speech of God) to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeably to Jer. 23:28,29. God having there been reproving the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they

spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there is no such thing as such a distinguishing excellency, or that, if there be, that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptive of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; who were made on purpose for those exercises that do respect God and wherein they have nextly to do with God: for reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And if it be rational

to suppose that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose that God would reserve that knowledge and wisdom, that is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself, and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is that highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: in this the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: it is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left meaner goods and lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in!

It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity: it is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that are the subject matter of this divine light; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: a seeing the truth of religion from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, *that* is consequent on it. But if

we take *reason* strictly -- not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments -- the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: it depends on the sense of the heart. -- Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

First, This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtile train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion: they are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. 1:26,27, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world --."

Secondly, This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves,

whether we have ever had this divine light, that has been described, let into our souls. If there be such a thing indeed, and it be not only a notion or whimsy of persons of weak and distempered brains, then doubtless it is a thing of great importance, whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel-doctrines which arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

Thirdly, All may hence be exhorted earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

1. This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of. It is more excellent than any human learning; it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen. Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that is or can be, *viz.*, the divine glory or excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful. Men have a great deal of pleasure in human knowledge, in studies of natural things; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart. There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the

Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour: it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect cleaving to it with full inclination and affection; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. This light, and this only, has its fruit in a universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to a universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

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The Excellency of Christ

"One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." [Rev 5:5-6]

Introduction

The visions and revelations the apostle John had of the future events of God's providence, are here introduced with a vision of the book of God's decrees, by which those events were fore-ordained. This is represented (Revelation 5:1) as a book in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, "*written within and on the back side, and sealed with seven seals.*" Books, in the form in which they were wont of old to be made, were broad leaves of parchment or paper, or something of that nature, joined together at one edge, and so rolled up together, and then sealed, or some way fastened together, to prevent their unfolding and opening. Hence we read of the roll of a book Jer. 36:2. It seems to have been such a book that John had a vision of here; and therefore it is said to be "*written within and on the back side,*" i. e. on the inside pages, and also on one of the outside pages, namely, that which it was rolled in, in rolling the book up together. And it is said to be "*sealed with seven seals,*" to signify that what was written in it was perfectly hidden and secret; or that God's decrees of future events are sealed, and shut up from all possibility of being discovered by creatures, till God is pleased to make them known. We find that seven is often used in Scripture as the number of perfection, to signify the superlative or most perfect degree of anything, which probably arose from this, that on the seventh day God beheld the works of creation finished, and rested and rejoiced in them, as being complete and perfect.

When John saw this book, he tells us, he "*saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*" And that he wept much, because "*no man was found worthy to open and read the book, neither to look thereon.*" And then tells us how his tears were dried up, namely, that "*one of the elders said unto him, "Weep not, Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed"* etc. as in the text. Though no man nor angel, nor any mere creature, was found either able to loose the seals, or worthy to be admitted to the privilege of reading the

book, yet this was declared, for the comfort of this beloved disciple, that Christ was found both able and worthy. And we have an account in the succeeding chapters how he actually did it, opening the seals in order, first one, and then another, revealing what God had decreed should come to pass hereafter. And we have an account in this chapter, of his coming and taking the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne, and of the joyful praises that were sung to him in heaven and earth on that occasion.

Many things might be observed in the words of the text; but it is to my present purpose only to take notice of the two distinct appellations here given to Christ.

1. He is called **a Lion**. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He seems to be called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, in allusion to what Jacob said in his blessing of the tribe on his death-bed; who, when he came to bless Judah, compares him to a lion, Gen. 49:9. "*Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?*" And also to the standard of the camp of Judah in the wilderness on which was displayed a lion, according to the ancient tradition of the Jews. It is much on account of the valiant acts of David that the tribe of Judah, of which David was, is in Jacob's prophetical blessing compared to a lion; but more especially with an eye to Jesus Christ, who also was of that tribe, and was descended of David, and is in our text called "*the Root of David*"; and therefore Christ is here called "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*"
2. He is called **a Lamb**. John was told of a Lion that had prevailed to open the book, and probably expected to see a lion in his vision; but while he is expecting, behold a Lamb appears to open the book, an exceeding diverse kind of creature from a lion. A lion is a devourer, one that is wont to make terrible slaughter of others; and no creature more easily falls a prey to him than a lamb. And Christ is here represented not only as a Lamb, a creature very liable to be slain, but a "*Lamb as it had been slain,*" that is, with the marks of its deadly wounds appearing on it.

That which I would observe from the words, for the subject of my present

discourse, is this, namely --

> **There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ.**

The lion and the lamb, though very diverse kinds of creatures, yet have each their peculiar excellencies. The lion excels in strength, and in the majesty of his appearance and voice: the lamb excels in meekness and patience, besides the excellent nature of the creature as good for food, and yielding that which is fit for our clothing and being suitable to be offered in sacrifice to God. But we see that Christ is in the text compared to both, because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him, -- In handling this subject I would

> **First**, Show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ.
> **Second**, Show how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appear in Christ's acts.
> **Third**, make application.

Part One

First, I would show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ. which appears in three things:

> **A)** There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ, as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another.
>
> **B)** There is in him a conjunction of such really diverse excellencies, as otherwise would have seemed to us utterly incompatible in the same subject.
>
> **C)** Such diverse excellencies are exercised in him towards men that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object.

A) There is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another. Such are the various divine perfections and excellencies that Christ is possessed of. Christ is a

divine person, and therefore has all the attributes of God. The difference between these is chiefly relative, and in our manner of conceiving them. And those which, in this sense, are most diverse, meet in the person of Christ. I shall mention two instances.

1. There do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension.

   Christ, as he is God, is infinitely great and high above all. He is higher than the kings of the earth; for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is higher than the heavens, and higher than the highest angels of heaven. So great is he, that all men, all kings and princes, are as worms of the dust before him; all nations are as the drop of the bucket, and the light dust of the balance; yea, and angels themselves are as nothing before him. He is so high, that he is infinitely above any need of us; above our reach, that we cannot be profitable to him; and above our conceptions, that we cannot comprehend him. Prov. 30:4 "*What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?*" Our understandings, if we stretch them never so far, cannot reach up to his divine glory. Job 11:8 "*It is high as heaven, what canst thou do?*" Christ is the Creator and great Possessor of heaven and earth. He is sovereign Lord of all. He rules over the whole universe, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him. His knowledge is without bound. His wisdom is perfect, and what none can circumvent. His power is infinite, and none can resist Him. His riches are immense and inexhaustible. His majesty is infinitely awful.

   And yet he is one of infinite condescension. None are so low or inferior, but Christ's condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of them. He condescends not only to the angels, humbling himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, but he also condescends to such poor creatures as men; and that not only so as to take notice of princes and great men, but of those that are of meanest rank and degree, "*the poor of the world,*" James 2:5. Such as are commonly despised by their fellow creatures, Christ does not despise. I Cor. 1:28 "*Base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen.*" Christ condescends to take notice of

beggars Luke 16:22 and people of the most despised nations. In Christ Jesus is neither "*Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free*" (Col. 3:11). He that is thus high condescends to take a gracious notice of little children Matt. 19:14. "*Suffer little children to come unto me.*" Yea, which is more, his condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of the most unworthy, sinful creatures, those that have no good deservings, and those that have infinite ill deservings.

Yea, so great is his condescension, that it is not only sufficient to take some gracious notice of such as these, but sufficient for every thing that is an act of condescension. His condescension is great enough to become their friend, to become their companion, to unite their souls to him in spiritual marriage. It is enough to take their nature upon him, to become one of them, that he may be one with them. Yea, it is great enough to abase himself yet lower for them, even to expose himself to shame and spitting; yea, to yield up himself to an ignominious death for them. And what act of condescension can be conceived of greater? Yet such an act as this, has his condescension yielded to, for those that are so low and mean, despicable and unworthy!

Such a conjunction of infinite highness and low condescension, in the same person, is admirable. We see, by manifold instances, what a tendency a high station has in men, to make them to be of a quite contrary disposition. If one worm be a little exalted above another, by having more dust, or a bigger dunghill, how much does he make of himself! What a distance does he keep from those that are below him! And a little condescension is what he expects should be made much of, and greatly acknowledged. Christ condescends to wash our feet; but how would great men, (or rather the bigger worms,) account themselves debased by acts of far less condescension!

2. There meet in Jesus Christ, infinite justice and infinite grace.

   As Christ is a divine person, he is infinitely holy and just, hating sin, and disposed to execute condign punishment for sin. He is the Judge of the world, and the infinitely just Judge of it, and will not at all acquit the wicked, or by any means clear the guilty.

And yet he is infinitely gracious and merciful. Though his justice be so strict with respect to all sin, and every breach of the law, yet he has grace sufficient for every sinner, and even the chief of sinners. And it is not only sufficient for the most unworthy to show them mercy, and bestow some good upon them, but to bestow the greatest good; yea, it is sufficient to bestow all good upon them, and to do all things for them. There is no benefit or blessing that they can receive, so great but the grace of Christ is sufficient to bestow it on the greatest sinner that ever lived. And not only so, but so great is his grace, that nothing is too much as the means of this good. It is sufficient not only to do great things, but also to suffer in order to do it, and not only to suffer, but to suffer most extremely even unto death, the most terrible of natural evils; and not only death, but the most ignominious and tormenting, and every way the most terrible that men could inflict; yea, and greater sufferings than men could inflict, who could only torment the body. He had sufferings in his soul, that were the more immediate fruits of the wrath of God against the sins of those he undertakes for.

B) There do meet in the person of Christ such really diverse excellencies, which otherwise would have been thought utterly incompatible in the same subject; such as are conjoined in no other person whatever, either divine, human, or angelical; and such as neither men nor angels would ever have imagined could have met together in the same person, had it not been seen in the person of Christ. I would give some instances.

1. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite glory and lowest humility. Infinite glory, and the virtue of humility, meet in no other person but Christ. They meet in no created person; for no created person has infinite glory, and they meet in no other divine person but Christ. For though the divine nature be infinitely abhorrent to pride, yet humility is not properly predicable of God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, that exist only in the divine nature; because it is a proper excellency only of a created nature; for it consists radically in a sense of a comparative lowness and littleness before God, or the great distance between God and the subject of this virtue; but it would

be a contradiction to suppose any such thing in God.

But in Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, those two diverse excellencies are sweetly united. He is a person infinitely exalted in glory and dignity. Phil. 2:6. "*Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*" There is equal honor due to him with the Father. John 5:23. "*That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.*" God himself says to him, "*thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,*" Heb. 1:8. And there is the same supreme respect and divine worship paid to him by the angels of heaven, as to God the Father, ver. 6. "*Let all the angels of God worship him.*"

But however he is thus above all, yet he is lowest of all in humility. There never was so great an instance of this virtue among either men or angels, as Jesus. None ever was so sensible of the distance between God and him, or had a heart so lowly before God, as the man Christ Jesus. Matt. 11:29. What a wonderful spirit of humility appeared in him, when he was here upon earth, in all his behavior! In his contentment in his mean outward condition, contentedly living in the family of Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, for thirty years together, and afterwards choosing outward meanness, poverty, and contempt, rather than earthly greatness; in his washing his disciples' feet, and in all his speeches and deportment towards them; in his cheerfully sustaining the form of a servant through his whole life, and submitting to such immense humiliation at death!

2. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty and transcendent meekness. These again are two qualifications that meet together in no other person but Christ. Meekness, properly so called, is a virtue proper only to the creature: we scarcely ever find meekness mentioned as a divine attribute in Scripture; at least not in the New Testament; for thereby seems to be signified, a calmness and quietness of spirit, arising from humility in mutable beings that are naturally liable to be put into a ruffle by the assaults of a tempestuous and injurious world. But Christ, being both God and man, hath both infinite

majesty and superlative meekness.

Christ was a person of infinite majesty. It is he that is spoken of, Psalm 45:3. "*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty*." It is he that is mighty, that rideth on the heavens, and his excellency on the sky. It is he that is terrible out of his holy places; who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea: before whom a fire goeth, and burneth up his enemies round about; at whose presence the earth quakes, and the hills melt; who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, who rebukes the sea, and maketh it dry and drieth up the rivers, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, from whose presence, and from the glory of whose power, the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction; who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who hath heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, and is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there is no end.

And yet he was the most marvellous instance of meekness, and humble quietness of spirit, that ever was; agreeable to the prophecies of him, Matthew 21:4f "*All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*." And, agreeable to what Christ declares of himself, Matt. 11:29. "*I am meek and lowly in heart*." And agreeable to what was manifest in his behavior: for there never was such an instance seen on earth, of a meek behavior, under injuries and reproaches, and towards enemies; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. He had a wonderful spirit of forgiveness, was ready to forgive his worst enemies, and prayed for them with fervent and effectual prayers. With what meekness did he appear in the ring of soldiers that were contemning and mocking him; he was silent, and opened not his mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter. Thus is Christ a Lion in majesty and a

Lamb in meekness.

3. There meet in the person of Christ the deepest reverence towards God and equality with God. Christ, when on earth, appeared full of holy reverence towards the Father. He paid the most reverential worship to him, praying to him with postures of reverence. Thus we read of his "*kneeling down and praying,*" Luke 22:41. This became Christ, as one who had taken on him the human nature, but at the same time he existed in the divine nature; whereby his person was in all respects equal to the person of the Father. God the Father hath no attribute or perfection that the Son hath not, in equal degree, and equal glory. These things meet in no other person but Jesus Christ.

4. There are conjoined in the person of Christ infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil.

   He was perfectly innocent,and deserved no suffering. He deserved nothing from God by any guilt of his own, and he deserved no ill from men. Yea, he was not only harmless and undeserving of suffering, but he was infinitely worthy; worthy of the infinite love of the Father, worthy of infinite and eternal happiness, and infinitely worthy of all possible esteem, love, and service from all men.

   And yet he was perfectly patient under the greatest sufferings that ever were endured in this world. Heb. 12:2. "*He endured the cross, despising the shame.*" He suffered not from his Father for his faults, but ours; and he suffered from men not for his faults but for those things on account of which he was infinitely worthy of their love and honor, which made his patience the more wonderful and the more glorious. 1 Pet. 2:20, "*For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently, but if when ye do well. and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was*

reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." There is no such conjunction of innocence, worthiness, and patience under sufferings, as in the person of Christ.

5. In the person of Christ are conjoined an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth.

   Christ is the Lord of all things in two respects: he is so, as God-man and Mediator, and thus his dominion is appointed, and given him of the Father. Having it by delegation from God, he is as it were the Father's vicegerent. But he is Lord of all things in another respect, namely, as he is (by his original nature) God; and so he is by natural right the Lord of all, and supreme over all as much as the Father. Thus, he has dominion over the world, not by delegation, but in his own right. He is not an under God, as the Arians suppose, but to all intents and purposes supreme God.

   And yet in the same person is found the greatest spirit of obedience to the commands and laws of God that ever was in the universe; which was manifest in his obedience here in this world. John 14:31 "*As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.*"-- John 15:10. "*Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*" The greatness of his obedience appears in its perfection, and in his obeying commands of such exceeding difficulty. Never any one received commands from God of such difficulty, and that were so great a trial of obedience, as Jesus Christ. One of God's commands to him was, that he should yield himself to those dreadful sufferings that he underwent. See John 10:18. "*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.*" "*This commandment received I of my Father.*" And Christ was thoroughly obedient to this command of God. Heb. 5:8. "*Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered.*" Philip. 2:8.

"*He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Never was there such an instance of obedience in man or angel as this, though he was at the same time supreme Lord of both angels and men.

6. In the person of Christ are conjoined absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation. This is another unparalleled conjunction.

   Christ, as he is God, is the absolute sovereign of the world, the sovereign disposer of all events. The decrees of God are all his sovereign decrees; and the work of creation, and all God's works of providence, are his sovereign works. It is he that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Col 1:16f. "*By him, and through him, and to him, are all things.*" John 5:17. "*The Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*" Matt. 8:3. "*I will, be thou clean.*"

   But yet Christ was the most wonderful instance of resignation that ever appeared in the world. He was absolutely and perfectly resigned when he had a near and immediate prospect of his terrible sufferings, and the dreadful cup that he was to drink. The idea and expectation of this made his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and put him into such an agony, that his sweat was as it were great drops or clots of blood, falling down to the ground. But in such circumstances he was wholly resigned to the will of God. Matt 26:39. "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*". Verse 42. "*O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*"

7. In Christ do meet together self-sufficiency, and an entire trust and reliance on God, which is another conjunction peculiar to the person of Christ.

   As he is a divine person, he is self-sufficient, standing in need of nothing. All creatures are dependent on him, but he is dependent on none, but is absolutely independent. His proceeding from the Father, in his eternal generation, argues no

proper dependence on the will of the Father; for that proceeding was natural and necessary, and not arbitrary.

But yet Christ entirely trusted in God: -- his enemies say that of him, "*He trusted in God that he would deliver him,*" Matt. 27:43. And the apostle testifies, I Pet. 2:23. "*That he committed himself God.*"

C) Such diverse excellencies are expressed in him towards men, that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object; as particularly these three, justice, mercy, and truth. The same that are mentioned in Psalm 85:10. "*Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*"

The strict justice of God, and even his revenging justice, and that against the sins of men, never was so gloriously manifested. as in Christ. He manifested an infinite regard to the attribute of God's justice, in that, when he had a mind to save sinners, he was willing to undergo such extreme sufferings, rather than that their salvation should be to the injury of the honor of that attribute. And as he is the Judge of the world, he doth himself exercise strict justice, he will not clear the guilty, nor at all acquit the wicked in judgment.

Yet how wonderfully is infinite mercy towards sinners displayed in him! And what glorious and ineffable grace and love have been and are exercised by him, towards sinful men! Though he be the just Judge of a sinful world, yet he is also the Savior of the world. Though he be a consuming fire to sin, yet he is the light and life of sinners. Rom. 3:25f. "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*"

So the immutable truth of God, in the threatenings of his law against the sins of men, was never so manifested as it is in Jesus Christ, for there never was any other so great a trial of the unalterableness of the truth of God in those threatenings, as when sin came to be

imputed to his own Son. And then in Christ has been seen already an actual complete accomplishment of those threatenings, which never has been nor will be seen in any other instance; because the eternity that will be taken up in fulfilling those threatenings on others, never will be finished. Christ manifested an infinite regard to this truth of God in his sufferings. And, in his judging the world, he makes the covenant of works, that contains those dreadful threatenings, his rule of judgement. He will see to it, that it is not infringed in the least jot or tittle: he will do nothing contrary to the threatenings of the law, and their complete fulfilment. And yet in him we have many great and precious promises, promises of perfect deliverance from the penalty of the law. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. And in him are all the promises of God yea, and Amen.

1. # Part Two

Having thus shown wherein there is an admirable conjunction of excellencies in Jesus Christ, I now proceed,

Secondly, To show how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts, [namely:]

A) in his taking of human nature,
B) in his earthly life,
C) in his sacrificial death,
D) in his exaltation in heaven,
E) in his final subduing of all evil when he returns in glory.]

A) It appears in what Christ did in taking on him our nature.

In this act, his infinite condescension wonderfully appeared, That he who was God should become man; that the word should be made flesh, and should take on him a nature infinitely below his original nature! And it appears yet more remarkably in the low circumstances of his incarnation: he was conceived in the womb of a poor young woman, whose poverty appeared in this, when she came to offer sacrifices of her purification, she brought what was allowed of in the law only in case of poverty, as Luke 2:24. "*According to what Is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*" This was allowed only in case the person was so poor that she was not able to offer a lamb. Lev. 12:8.

And though his infinite condescension thus appeared in the manner of his incarnation, yet his divine dignity also appeared in it; for though he was conceived in the womb of a poor virgin, yet he was conceived there by the power of the Holy Ghost. And his divine dignity also appeared in the holiness of his conception and birth. Though he was conceived in the womb of one of the corrupt race of mankind, yet he was conceived and born without sin; as the angel said to the blessed Virgin, Luke 1:35. "*The Holy Ghost shall come*

upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

His infinite condescension marvelously appeared in the manner of his birth. He was brought forth in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. The inn was taken up by others, that were looked upon as persons of greater account. The Blessed Virgin, being poor and despised, was turned or shut out. Though she was in such necessitous circumstances, yet those that counted themselves her betters would not give place to her; and therefore, in the time of her travail, she was forced to betake herself to a stable; and when the child was born, it was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. There Christ lay a little infant, and there he eminently appeared as a lamb.

But yet this feeble infant, born thus in a stable, and laid in a manger, was born to conquer and triumph over Satan, that roaring lion. He came to subdue the mighty powers of darkness, and make a show of them openly, and so to restore peace on earth, and to manifest God's good-will towards men, and to bring glory to God in the highest, according as the end of his birth was declared by the joyful songs of the glorious hosts of angels appearing to the shepherds at the same time that the infant lay in the manger; whereby his divine dignity was manifested.

B) This admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in the acts and various passages of Christ's life.

Though Christ dwelt in mean outward circumstances, whereby his condescension and humility especially appeared, and his majesty was veiled; yet his divine divinity and glory did in many of his acts shine through the veil, and it illustriously appeared, that he was not only the Son of man, but the great God.

Thus, in the circumstances of his infancy, his outward meanness appeared; yet there was something then to show forth his divine

dignity, in the wise men's being stirred up to come from the east to give honor to him their being led by a miraculous star, and coming and falling down and worshipping him, and presenting him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. His humility and meekness wonderfully appeared in his subjection to his mother and reputed father when he was a child. Herein he appeared as a lamb. But his divine glory broke forth and shone when, at twelve years old, he disputed with doctors in the temple. In that he appeared, in some measure, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

And so, after he entered on his public ministry, his marvellous humility and meekness was manifested in his choosing to appear in such mean outward circumstances; and in being contented in them, when he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and depended on the charity of some of his followers for his subsistence, as appears by Luke 8. at the beginning. How meek, condescending, and familiar his treatment of his disciples; his discourses with them, treating them as a father his children, yea, as friends and companions. How patient, bearing such affliction and reproach, and so many injuries from the scribes and Pharisees, and others. In these things he appeared as a Lamb.

And yet he at the same time did in many ways show forth his divine majesty and glory, particularly in the miracles he wrought, which were evidently divine works, and manifested omnipotent power, and so declared him to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His wonderful and miraculous works plainly showed him to be the God of nature; in that it appeared by them that he had all nature in his hands, and could lay an arrest upon it, and stop and change its course as he pleased. In healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and unstopping the ears of the deaf, and healing the lame, he showed that he was the God that framed the eye, and created the ear, and was the author of the frame of man's body. By the dead's rising at his command, it appeared that he was the author and fountain of life, and that "*God the Lord, to whom belong the issues from death.*" By his walking on the sea in a storm, when the waves were raised, he showed himself to be that God spoken of in Job 9:8. "*That treadeth*

on the waves of the sea." By his stilling the storm, and calming the rage of the sea, by his powerful command, saying, "*Peace, be still,*" he showed that he has the command of the universe, and that he is that God who brings things to pass by the word of his power, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast; Psalm 115:7. "*Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves*." And Psalm 107:29. "*That maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still*." And Psalm 139:8f. "*O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them*." Christ, by casting out devils, remarkably appeared as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and showed that he was stronger than the roaring lion, that seizes whom he may devour. He commanded them to come out, and they were forced to obey. They were terribly afraid of him; they fall down before him, and beseech him not so torment them. He forces a whole legion of them to forsake their hold, by his powerful word; and they could not so much as enter into the swine without his leave. He showed the glory of his omniscience, by telling the thoughts of men; as we have often an account. Herein he appeared to be that God spoken of, Amos 4:13. "*That declareth unto man what is his thought*." Thus, in the midst of his meanness and humiliation, his divine glory appeared in his miracles, John 2:11. "*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory*."

And though Christ ordinarily appeared without outward glory, and in great obscurity, yet at a certain time he threw off the veil, and appeared in his divine majesty, so far as it could be outwardly manifested to men in this frail state, when he was transfigured in the mount. The apostle Peter, 2 Pet. 1:16,17. was an "*eye-witness of his majesty, when he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; which voice that came from heaven they heard, when they were with him in the holy mount*."

And at the same time that Christ was wont to appear in such

meekness, condescension, and humility, in his familiar discourses with his disciples, appearing therein as the Lamb of God; he was also wont to appear as The Lion of the tribe of Judah, with divine authority and majesty, in his so sharply rebuking the scribes and Pharisees, and other hypocrites.

C) This admirable conjunction of excellencies remarkably appears in his offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings.

As this was the greatest thing in all the works of redemption, the greatest act of Christ in that work; so in this act especially does there appear that admirable conjunction of excellencies that has been spoken of. Christ never so much appeared as a lamb, as when he was slain: "*He came like a lamb to the slaughter,*" Isaiah 53:7. Then he was offered up to God as a lamb without blemish, and without spot: then especially did he appear to be the anti-type of the lamb of the passover: 1 Cor 5:7. "*Christ our Passover sacrificed for us.*" And yet in that act he did in an especial manner appear as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; yea, in this above all other acts, in many respects, as may appear in the following things.

1. Then was Christ in the greatest degree of his humiliation, and yet by that, above all other things, his divine glory appears.

   Christ's humiliation was great, in being born in such a low condition, of a poor virgin, and in a stable. His humiliation was great, in being subject to Joseph the carpenter, and Mary his mother, and afterwards living in poverty, so as not to have where to lay his head; and in suffering such manifold and bitter reproaches as he suffered, while he went about preaching and working miracles. But his humiliation was never so great as it was, in his last sufferings, beginning with his agony in the garden, till he expired on the cross. Never was he subject to such ignominy as then, never did he suffer so much pain in his body, or so much sorrow in his soul; never was he in so great an exercise of his condescension, humility, meekness, and patience, as he was in these last sufferings; never was his divine glory and majesty covered with so thick and dark a veil; never did he so

empty himself and make himself of no reputation, as at this time.

And yet, never was his divine glory so manifested, by any act of his, as in yielding himself up to these sufferings. When the fruit of it came to appear, and the mystery and ends of it to be unfolded in its issue, then did the glory of it appear, then did it appear as the most glorious act of Christ that ever he exercised towards the creature. This act of his is celebrated by the angels and hosts of heaven with peculiar praises, as that which is above all others glorious, as you may see in the context, (Revelation 5:9-12) "*And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*."

2. He never in any act gave so great a manifestation of love to God, and yet never so manifested his love to those that were enemies to God, as in that act.

   Christ never did any thing whereby his love to the Father was so eminently manifested, as in his laying down his life, under such inexpressible sufferings, in obedience to his command and for the vindication of the honor of his authority and majesty; nor did ever any mere creature give such a testimony of love to God as that was.

   And yet this was the greatest expression of his love to sinful men who were enemies to God; Rom. 5:10. "*When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son.*" The greatness of Christ's love to such, appears in nothing so much as

in its being dying love. That blood of Christ which fell in great drops to the ground, in his agony, was shed from love to God's enemies, and his own. That shame and spitting, that torment of body, and that exceeding sorrow, even unto death, which he endured in his soul, was what he underwent from love to rebels against God to save them from hell, and to purchase for them eternal glory. Never did Christ so eminently show his regard to God's honor, as in offering up himself a victim to Justice. And yet in this above all, he manifested his love to them who dishonored God, so as to bring such guilt on themselves, that nothing less than his blood could atone for it.

3. Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice, and yet never suffered so much from divine Justice, as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins.

   In Christ's great sufferings did his infinite regard to the honor of God's justice distinguishingly appear, for it was from regard to that that he thus humbled himself.

   And yet in these sufferings, Christ was the target of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him, on account of our guilt; which made him sweat blood, and cry out upon the cross, and probably rent his vitals--broke his heart, the fountain of blood, or some other blood vessels--and by the violent fermentation turned his blood to water. For the blood and water that issued out of his side, when pierced by the spear, seems to have been extravasated blood, and so there might be a kind of literal fulfilment of Psalm 22:14. "*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels*." And this was the way and means by which Christ stood up for the honor of God's justice, namely, by thus suffering its terrible executions. For when he had undertaken for sinners, and had substituted himself in their room, divine justice could have its due honor no other way than by his suffering its revenges.

In this the diverse excellencies that met in the person of Christ appeared, namely, his infinite regard to God's justice, and such love to those that have exposed themselves to it, as induced him thus to yield himself a sacrifice to it.

4. Christ's holiness never so illustriously shone forth as it did in his last sufferings, and yet he never was to such a degree treated as guilty.

   Christ's holiness never had such a trial as it had then, and therefore never had so great a manifestation. When it was tried in this furnace it came forth as gold, or as silver purified seven times. His holiness then above all appeared in his steadfast pursuit of the honor of God, and in his obedience to him. For his yielding himself unto death was transcendently the greatest act of obedience that ever was paid to God by any one since the foundation of the world.

   And yet then Christ was in the greatest degree treated as a wicked person would have been. He was apprehended and bound as a malefactor. His accusers represented him as a most wicked wretch. In his sufferings before his crucifixion, he was treated as if he had been the worst and vilest of mankind, and then, he was put to a kind of death, that none but the worst sort of malefactors were wont to suffer, those that were most abject in their persons, and guilty of the blackest crimes. And he suffered as though guilty from God himself, by reason of our guilt imputed to him; for he who knew no sin, was made sin for us; he was made subject to wrath, as if he had been sinful himself. He was made a curse for us.

   Christ never so greatly manifested his hatred of sin, as against God, as in his dying to take away the dishonor that sin had done to God; and yet never was he to such a degree subject to the terrible effects of God's hatred of sin, and wrath against it, as he was then. in this appears those diverse excellencies meeting in Christ, namely, love to God, and grace to sinners.

5. He never was so dealt with, as unworthy, as in his last sufferings, and yet it is chiefly on account of them that he is accounted worthy.

   He was therein dealt with as if he had not been worthy to live: they cry out, "*Away with him! away with him! Crucify him.*" John 19:15. And they prefer Barabbas before him. And he suffered from the Father, as one whose demerits were infinite, by reason of our demerits that were laid upon him.

   And yet it was especially by that act of his subjecting himself to those sufferings that he merited, and on the account of which chiefly he was accounted worthy of the glory of his exaltation. Philip. 2:8, 9. "*He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him.*" And we see that it is on this account chiefly, that he is extolled as worthy by saints and angels in the context: "*Worthy,*" say they, "*is the Lamb that was slain.*" This shows an admirable conjunction in him of infinite dignity, and infinite condescension and love to the infinitely unworthy.

6. Christ in his last sufferings suffered most extremely from those towards whom he was then manifesting his greatest act of love.

   He never suffered so much from his Father, (though not from any hatred to him, but from hatred to our sins,) for he then forsook him, or took away the comforts of his presence; and then "*it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.*" as Isaiah 53:10. And yet he never gave so great a manifestation of love to God as then, as has been already observed.

   So Christ never suffered so much from the hands of men as he did then; and yet never was in so high an exercise of love to men. He never was so ill treated by his disciples; who were so unconcerned about his sufferings, that they .would not watch with him one hour, in his agony; and when he was apprehended, all forsook him and fled, except Peter, who denied him with oaths and curses. And yet then he was suffering, shedding his

blood, and pouring out his soul unto death for them. Yea, he probably was then shedding his blood for some of them that shed his blood, for whom he prayed while they were crucifying him; and who were probably afterwards brought home to Christ by Peter's preaching. (Compare Luke 23:34. Acts 2:23,36,37,41. and chap. 3:17. and chap. 4.) This shows an admirable meeting of justice and grace in the redemption of Christ.

7. It was in Christ's last sufferings, above all, that he was delivered up to the power of his enemies; and yet by these, above all, he obtained victory over his enemies.

   Christ never was so in his enemies' hands, as in the time of his last sufferings. They sought his life before; but from time to time they were restrained, and Christ escaped out of their hands, and this reason is given for it, that his time was not yet come. But now they were suffered to work their will upon him, he was in a great degree delivered up to the malice and cruelty of both wicked men and devils. And therefore when Christ's enemies came to apprehend him, he says to them, Luke 22:53. "*When I was daily with you in the temple ye stretched forth no hand against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*"

   And yet it was principally by means of those sufferings that he conquered and overthrew his enemies. Christ never so effectually bruised Satan's head, as when Satan bruised his heel. The weapon with which Christ warred against the devil, and obtained a most complete victory and glorious triumph over him, was the cross, the instrument and weapon with which he thought he had overthrown Christ, and brought on him shameful destruction. Col. 2:14,15. "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances,--nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*" In his last sufferings, Christ sapped the very foundations of Satan's kingdom, he conquered his enemies in their own territories, and beat them with their own weapons as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. The devil had, as it were, swallowed up Christ, as the

whale did Jonah-- but it was deadly poison to him, he gave him a mortal wound in his own bowels. He was soon sick of his morsel, and was forced to do by him as the whale did by Jonah. To this day he is heart-sick of what he then swallowed as his prey. In those sufferings of Christ was laid the foundation of all that glorious victory he has already obtained over Satan, in the overthrow of his heathenish kingdom in the Roman empire, and all the success the gospel has had since; and also of all his future and still more glorious victory that is to be obtained in the earth. Thus Samson's riddle is most eminently fulfilled, Judges 14:14. "*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness*." And thus the true Samson does more towards the destruction of his enemies at his death than in his life, in yielding up himself to death, he pulls down the temple of Dagon, and destroys many thousands of his enemies, even while they are making themselves sport in his sufferings--and so he whose type was the ark, pulls down Dagon, and breaks off his head and hands in his own temple, even while he is brought in there as Dagon's captive. (1 Samuel 5:1-4)

Thus Christ appeared at the same time, and in the same act, as both a lion and a lamb. He appeared as a lamb in the hands of his cruel enemies; as a lamb in the paws, and between the devouring jaws, of a roaring lion; yea, he was a lamb actually slain by this lion: and yet at the same time, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he conquers and triumphs over Satan; destroying his own destroyer; as Samson did the lion that roared upon him, when he rent him as he would a kid. And in nothing has Christ appeared so much as a lion, in glorious strength destroying his enemies, as when he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. In his greatest weakness he was most strong; and when he suffered most from his enemies, he brought the greatest confusion on his enemies.

Thus this admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies was manifest in Christ, in his offering up himself to God in his last sufferings.

D) It is still manifest in his acts, in his present state of exaltation in heaven. Indeed, in his exalted state, he most eminently appears in manifestation of those excellencies, on the account of which he is compared to a lion; but still he appears as a lamb; Rev. 14:1. "*And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on mount Sion*"; as in his state of humiliation he chiefly appeared as a lamb, and yet did not appear without manifestation of his divine majesty and power, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Though Christ be now at the right-hand of God, exalted as King of heaven, and Lord of the universe; yet as he still is in the human nature, he still excels in humility. Though the man Christ Jesus be the highest of all creatures in heaven, yet he as much excels them all in humility as he doth in glory and dignity, for none sees so much of the distance between God and him as he does. And though he now appears in such glorious majesty and dominion in heaven, yet he appears as a lamb in his condescending, mild, and sweet treatment of his saints there, for he is a Lamb still, even amidst the throne of his exaltation, and he that is the Shepherd of the whole flock is himself a Lamb, and goes before them in heaven as such. Rev. 7:17. "*For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" Though in heaven every knee bows to him, and though the angels fall down before him adoring him, yet he treats his saints with infinite condescension, mildness, and endearment. And in his acts towards the saints on earth, he still appears as a lamb, manifesting exceeding love and tenderness in his intercession for them, as one that has had experience of affliction and temptation. He has not forgot what these things are, nor has he forgot how to pity those that are subject to them. And he still manifests his lamb-like excellencies, in his dealings with his saints on earth, in admirable forbearance, love, gentleness, and compassion. Behold him instructing, supplying, supporting, and comforting them; often coming to them, and manifesting himself to them by

his Spirit, that he may sup with them, and they with him. Behold him admitting them to sweet communion, enabling them with boldness and confidence to come to him, and solacing their hearts. And in heaven Christ still appears, as it were, with the marks of his wounds upon him, and so appears as a Lamb as it had been slain, as he was represented in vision to St John, in the text, when he appeared to open the book sealed with seven seals, which is part of the glory of his exaltation.

E) And lastly, this admirable conjunction of excellencies will be manifest in Christ's acts at the last judgement.

He then, above all other times, will appear as the Lion of the tribe of Judah in infinite greatness and majesty, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels, and the earth shall tremble before him, and the hills shall melt. This is he (Rev. 20:11.) "*that shall sit on a great white throne, before whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away*." He will then appear in the most dreadful and amazing manner to the wicked. The devils tremble at the thought of that appearance, and when it shall be, the kings, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains. and the mighty men, and every bond-man and every free-man, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, to hide them from the face and wrath of the Lamb. And none can declare or conceive of the amazing manifestations of wrath in which he will then appear towards these, or the trembling and astonishment the shrieking and gnashing of teeth, with which they shall stand before his judgment-seat, and receive the terrible sentence of his wrath.

And yet he will at the same time appear as a Lamb to his saints; he will receive them as friends and brethren, treating them with infinite mildness and love. There shall be nothing in him terrible to them, but towards them he will clothe himself wholly with sweetness and endearment. The church shall be then admitted to him as his bride; that shall be her wedding-day. The saints

shall all be sweetly invited to come with him to inherit the kingdom, and reign in it with him to all eternity.

1.

1. # Part Three

[I would now show how the aforesaid teaching is of benefit to us, in that

A) it gives us insight into the names of Christ in Scripture,
B) it encourages us to accept him as our Savior,
C) it encourages us to accept him as our Friend.]

A) From this doctrine we may learn one reason why Christ is called by such a variety of names, and held forth under such a variety of representations, in Scripture. It is the better to signify and exhibit to us that variety of excellencies that meet together and are conjoined in him. Many appellations are mentioned together in one verse Isaiah 9:6. "*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*" It shows a wonderful conjunction of excellencies, that the same person should be a Son, born and given, and yet be the everlasting Father, without beginning or end, that he should be a Child, and yet be he whose name is Counsellor, and the mighty God; and well may his name, in whom such things are conjoined, be called wonderful.

By reason of the same wonderful conjunction, Christ is represented by a great variety of sensible things, that are on some account excellent. Thus in some places he is called a Sun, as Mal. 4:2, in others a Star, Numb. 24:17. And he is especially represented by the Morning star, as being that which excels all other stars in brightness, and is the forerunner of the day, Rev. 22:16. And, as in our text, he is compared to a lion in one verse, and a lamb in the next, so sometimes he is compared to a roe or young hart, another creature most diverse from a lion. So in

some places he is called a rock, in others he is compared to a pearl. In some places he is called a man of war, and the Captain of our Salvation, in other places he is represented as a bridegroom. In the second chapter of Canticles, the first verse, he is compared to a rose and a lily, that are sweet and beautiful flowers; in the next verse but one, he is compared to a tree bearing sweet fruit. In Isaiah 53:2 he is called a Root out of a dry ground; but elsewhere, instead of that, he is called the Tree of Life, that grows (not in a dry or barren ground, but) "*in the midst of the paradise of God*." Rev. 2:7.

B) Let the consideration of this wonderful meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ induce you to accept of him, and close with him as your Savior. As all manner of excellencies meet in him, so there are concurring in him all manner of arguments and motives, to move you to choose him for your Savior, and every thing that tends to encourage poor sinners to come and put their trust in him: his fullness and all-sufficiency as a Savior gloriously appear in that variety of excellencies that has been spoken of.

Fallen man is in a state of exceeding great misery, and is helpless in it; he is a poor weak creature, like an infant cast out in its blood in the day that it is born. But Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah; he is strong, though we are weak; he hath prevailed to do that for us which no creature else could do. Fallen man is a mean despicable creature, a contemptible worm; but Christ, who has undertaken for us, is infinitely honorable and worthy. Fallen man is polluted, but Christ is infinitely holy; fallen man is hateful, but Christ is infinitely lovely; fallen man is the object of God's indignation, but Christ is infinitely dear to him. We have dreadfully provoked God, but Christ has performed that righteousness which is infinitely precious in God's eyes.

And here is not only infinite strength and infinite worthiness, but infinite condescension, and love and mercy, as great as

power and dignity. If you are a poor, distressed sinner, whose heart is ready to sink for fear that God never will have mercy on you, you need not be afraid to go to Christ, for fear that he is either unable or unwilling to help you. Here is a strong foundation, and an inexhaustible treasure, to answer the necessities of your poor soul, and here is infinite grace and gentleness to invite and embolden a poor, unworthy, fearful soul to come to it. If Christ accepts of you, you need not fear but that you will be safe, for he is a strong Lion for your defense. And if you come, you need not fear but that you shall be accepted; for he is like a Lamb to all that come to him, and receives then with infinite grace and tenderness. It is true he has awful majesty, he is the great God, and infinitely high above you; but there is this to encourage and embolden the poor sinner, that Christ is man as well as God; he is a creature, as well as the Creator, and he is the most humble and lowly in heart of any creature in heaven or earth. This may well make the poor unworthy creature bold in coming to him. You need not hesitate one moment; but may run to him, and cast yourself upon him. You will certainly be graciously and meekly received by him. Though he is a lion, he will only be a lion to your enemies, but he will be a lamb to you. It could not have been conceived, had it not been so in the person of Christ, that there could have been so much in any Savior, that is inviting and tending to encourage sinners to trust in him. Whatever your circumstances are, you need not be afraid to come to such a Savior as this. Be you never so wicked a creature, here is worthiness enough; be you never so poor, and mean, and ignorant a creature, there is no danger of being despised, for though he be so much greater than you, he is also immensely more humble than you. Any one of you that is a father or mother, will not despise one of your own children that comes to you in distress: much less danger is there of Christ's despising you, if you in your heart come to him.

Here let me a little expostulate with the poor, burdened, distressed soul.

1. What are you afraid of, that you dare not venture your soul upon Christ? Are you afraid that he cannot save you, that he is not strong enough to conquer the enemies of your soul? But how can you desire one stronger than "*the almighty God*"? as Christ is called, Isa. 9:6. Is there need of greater than infinite strength? Are you afraid that he will not be willing to stoop so low as to take any gracious notice of you? But then, look on him, as he stood in the ring of soldiers, exposing his blessed face to be buffeted and spit upon by them! Behold him bound with his back uncovered to those that smote him! And behold him hanging on the cross! Do you think that he that had condescension enough to stoop to these things, and that for his crucifiers, will be unwilling to accept of you, if you come to him? Or, are you afraid that if he does accept you, that God the Father will not accept of him for you? But consider, will God reject his own Son, in whom his infinite delight is, and has been, from all eternity, and who is so united to him, that if he should reject him he would reject himself?
2. What is there that you can desire should be in a Savior, that is not in Christ? Or, wherein should you desire a Savior should be otherwise than Christ is? What excellency is there wanting? What is there that is great or good; what is there that is venerable or winning; what is there that is adorable or endearing; or, what can you think of that would be encouraging, which is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Savior to be great and honorable, because you are not willing to be beholden to a mean person? And, is not Christ a person honorable enough to be worthy that you should be dependent on him? Is he not a person high enough to be appointed to so honorable a work as your salvation? Would you not only have a Savior of high degree, but would you have him, notwithstanding his exaltation and dignity, to be made also of low degree, that he might have experience of afflictions and trials, that he might learn by the things that he has suffered, to pity them that suffer and are tempted? And has not Christ been made

low enough for you? and has he not suffered enough? Would you not only have him possess experience of the afflictions you now suffer, but also of that amazing wrath that you fear hereafter, that he may know how to pity those that are in danger, and afraid of it? This Christ has had experience of, which experience gave him a greater sense of it, a thousand times, than you have, or any man living has. Would you have your Savior to be one who is near to God, that so his mediation might be prevalent with him? And can you desire him to be nearer to God than Christ is, who is his only-begotten Son, of the same essence with the Father? And would you not only have him near to God, but also near to you, that you may have free access to him? And would you have him nearer to you than to be in the same nature, united to you by a spiritual union, so close as to be fitly represented by the union of the wife to the husband, of the branch to the vine, of the member to the head; yea, so as to be one spirit? For so he will be united to you, if you accept of him. Would you have a Savior that has given some great and extraordinary testimony of mercy and love to sinners, by something that he has done, as well as by what he says? And can you think or conceive of greater things than Christ has done? Was it not a great thing for him, who was God, to take upon him human nature: to be not only God, but man thenceforward to all eternity? But would you look upon suffering for sinners to be a yet greater testimony of love to sinners, than merely doing, though it be ever so extraordinary a thing that he has done? And would you desire that a Savior should suffer more than Christ has suffered for sinners? What is there wanting, or what would you add if you could, to make him more fit to be your Savior?

But further, to induce you to accept of Christ as your Savior, consider two things particularly.

1. How much Christ appears as the Lamb of God in his invitations to you to come to him and trust in him. With

what sweet grace and kindness does he, from time to time, call and invite you, as Prov. 8:4. "*Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.*" And Isaiah 55:1-3 "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat-- yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*" How gracious is he here in inviting every one that thirsts, and in so repeating his invitation over and over, "*Come ye to the waters, come, buy and eat - - yea come!*" Mark the excellency of that entertainment which he invites you to accept of; "*Come, buy wine and milk!*" your poverty, having nothing to pay for it, shall be no objection, "*Come, he that hath no money, come without money, and without price!*" What gracious arguments and expostulations he uses with you! "*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*" As much as to say, It is altogether needless for you to continue laboring and toiling for that which can never serve your turn, seeking rest in the world, and in your own righteousness -- I have made abundant provision for you, of that which is really good, and will fully satisfy your desires, and answer your end, and I stand ready to accept of you: you need not be afraid; If you will come to me, I will engage to see all your wants supplied, and you made a happy creature. As he promises in the third verse, "*Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*" And so Prov. 9 at the beginning. How gracious and sweet is the invitation there! "*Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither;*" let you be never so poor, ignorant, and blind a creature, you shall be welcome. And in the following words Christ sets forth the provision that he has made for you, "*Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*" You are in a poor famishing state, and have nothing wherewith to feed your perishing soul; you have

been seeking something, but yet remain destitute. Hearken, how Christ calls you to eat of his bread, and to drink of the wine that he hath mingled! And how much like a lamb does Christ appear in Matt. 9:28 30. "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" O thou poor distressed soul! whoever thou art, consider that Christ mentions thy very case when he calls to them who labor and are heavy laden! How he repeatedly promises you rest if you come to him! In the 28th verse he says, "*I will give you rest.*" And in the 29th verse, "*Ye shall find rest to your souls.*" This is what you want. This is the thing you have been so long in vain seeking after. O how sweet would rest be to you, if you could but obtain it! Come to Christ, and you shall obtain it. And hear how Christ, to encourage you, represents himself as a lamb! He tells you, that he is meek and lowly in heart, and are you afraid to come to such a one! And again, Rev. 3:20. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him and he with me.*" Christ condescends not only to call you to him, but he comes to you; he comes to your door, and there knocks. He might send an officer and seize you as a rebel and vile malefactor, but instead of that, he comes and knocks at your door, and seeks that you would receive him into your house, as your Friend and Savior. And he not only knocks at your door, but he stands there waiting, while you are backward and unwilling. And not only so, but he makes promises what he will do for you, if you will admit him, what privileges he will admit you to; he will sup with you, and you with him. And again, Rev. 22:16,17. "*I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely.*" How

does Christ here graciously set before you his own winning attractive excellency! And how does he condescend to declare to you not only his own invitation, but the invitation of the Spirit and the bride, if by any means he might encourage you to come! And how does he invite every one that will, that they may "*take of the water of life freely,*" that they may take it as a free gift, however precious it be, and though it be the Water of life.

2. If you do come to Christ, he will appear as a Lion, in his glorious power and dominion, to defend you. All those excellencies of his, in which he appears as a lion, shall be yours, and shall be employed for you in your defense, for your safety, and to promote your glory, he will be as a lion to fight against your enemies. He that touches you, or offends you, will provoke his wrath, as he that stirs up a lion. Unless your enemies can conquer this Lion, they shall not be able to destroy or hurt you; unless they are stronger than he, they shall not be able to hinder your happiness. Isaiah 31:4. "*For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.*"

C) Let what has been said be improved to induce you to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and choose him for your friend and portion. As there is such an admirable meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ, so there is every thing in him to render him worthy of your love and choice, and to win and engage it. Whatsoever there is or can be desirable in a friend, is in Christ, and that to the highest degree that can be desired.

Would you choose for a friend a person of great dignity? It is a thing taking with men to have those for their friends who are much above them; because they look upon themselves honored by the friendship of such. Thus, how taking would it be with an

inferior maid to be the object of the dear love of some great and excellent prince. But Christ is infinitely above you, and above all the princes of the earth; for he is the King of kings. So honorable a person as this offers himself to you, in the nearest and dearest friendship.

And would you choose to have a friend not only great but good? In Christ infinite greatness and infinite goodness meet together, and receive lustre and glory one from another. His greatness is rendered lovely by his goodness. The greater any one is without goodness, so much the greater evil; but when infinite goodness is joined with greatness, it renders it a glorious and adorable greatness. So, on the other hand, his infinite goodness receives lustre from his greatness. He that is of great understanding and ability, and is withal of a good and excellent disposition, is deservedly more esteemed than a lower and lesser being with the same kind inclination and good will. Indeed goodness is excellent in whatever subject it be found; it is beauty and excellency itself, and renders all excellent that are possessed of it; and yet most excellent when joined with greatness. The very same excellent qualities of gold render the body in which they are inherent more precious, and of greater value, when joined with greater than when with lesser dimensions. And how glorious is the sight, to see him who is the great Creator and supreme Lord of heaven and earth, full of condescension, tender pity and mercy, towards the mean and unworthy! His almighty power, and infinite majesty and self-sufficiency, render his exceeding love and grace the more surprising And how do his condescension and compassion endear his majesty, power, and dominion, and render those attributes pleasant, that would otherwise be only terrible! Would you not desire that your friend, though great and honorable, should be of such condescension and grace, and so to have the way opened to free access to him, that his exaltation above you might not hinder your free enjoyment of his friendship? -- And would you choose not only that the infinite greatness and majesty of your friend should be, as it were, mollified and sweetened with

condescension and grace; but would you also desire to have your friend brought nearer to you? Would you choose a friend far above you, and yet as it were upon a level with you too? Though it be taking with men to have a near and dear friend of superior dignity, yet there is also an inclination in them to have their friend a sharer with them in circumstances. Thus is Christ. Though he be the great God, yet he has, as it were, brought himself down to be upon a level with you, so as to become man as you are that he might not only be your Lord, but your brother, and that he might be the more fit to be a companion for such a worm of the dust. This is one end of Christ's taking upon him man's nature, that his people might be under advantages for a more familiar converse with him than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow of. And upon this account the church longed for Christ's incarnation, Cant. 8:1. "*O that thou wert my brother that sucked the breast of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised.*" One design of God in the gospel is to bring us to make God the object of our undivided respect, that he may engross our regard every way, that whatever natural inclination there is in our souls, he may be the centre of it; that God may be all in all. But there is an inclination in the creature, not only to the adoration of a Lord and Sovereign, but to complacence in some one as a friend, to love and delight in some one that may be conversed with as a companion. And virtue and holiness do not destroy or weaken this inclination of our nature. But so hath God contrived in the affair of our redemption, that a divine person may be the object even of this inclination of our nature. And in order hereto, such a one is come down to us, and has taken our nature, and is become one of us, and calls himself our friend, brother, and companion. Psalm 122:8. "*For my brethren and companions' sake, will I now say, Peace be within thee.*"

But is it not enough in order to invite and encourage you to free access to a friend so great and high, that he is one of infinite condescending grace, and also has taken your own nature, and is become man? But would you, further to embolden and win you,

have him a man of wonderful meekness and humility? Why, such a one is Christ! He is not only become man for you, but far the meekest and most humble of all men, the greatest instance of these sweet virtues that ever was, or will be. And besides these, he has all other human excellencies in the highest perfection. These, indeed, are no proper addition to his divine excellencies. Christ has no more excellency in his person, since his incarnation, than he had before; for divine excellency is infinite, and cannot be added to. Yet his human excellencies are additional manifestations of his glory and excellency to us, and are additional recommendations of him to our esteem and love, who are of finite comprehension. Though his human excellencies are but communications and reflections of his divine, and though this light, as reflected, falls infinitely short of the divine fountain of light in its immediate glory; yet the reflection shines not without its proper advantages, as presented to our view and affection. The glory of Christ in the qualifications of his human nature, appears to us in excellencies that are of our own kind, and are exercised in our own way and manner, and so, in some respect, are peculiarly fitted to invite our acquaintance and draw our affection. The glory of Christ as it appears in his divinity, though far brighter, more dazzles our eyes, and exceeds the strength of our sight or our comprehension; but, as it shines in the human excellencies of Christ, it is brought more to a level with our conceptions, and suitableness to our nature and manner, yet retaining a semblance of the same divine beauty, and a savor of the same divine sweetness. But as both divine and human excellencies meet together in Christ, they set off and recommend each other to us. It tends to endear the divine majesty and holiness of Christ to us, that these are attributes of one in our nature, one of us, who is become our brother, and is the meekest and humblest of men. It encourages us to look upon these divine perfections, however high and great; since we have some near concern in and liberty freely to enjoy them. And on the other hand, how much more glorious and surprising do the meekness, the humility, obedience, resignation, and other human excellencies

of Christ appear, when we consider that they are in so great a person, as the eternal Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth!

By your choosing Christ for your friend and portion, you will obtain these two infinite benefits.

1. Christ will give himself to you, with all those various excellencies that meet in him, to your full and everlasting enjoyment. He will ever after treat you as his dear friend; and you shall ere long be where he is, and shall behold his glory, and dwell with him, in most free and intimate communion and enjoyment.

   When the saints get to heaven, they shall not merely see Christ, and have to do with him as subjects and servants with a glorious and gracious Lord and Sovereign, but Christ will entertain them as friends and brethren. This we may learn from the manner of Christ's conversing with his disciples here on earth: though he was their Sovereign Lord, and did not refuse, but required, their supreme respect and adoration, yet he did not treat them as earthly sovereigns are wont to do their subjects. He did not keep them at an aweful distance, but all along conversed with them with the most friendly familiarity, as a father amongst a company of children, yea, as with brethren. So he did with the twelve, and so he did with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He told his disciples, that he did not call them servants, but friends, and we read of one of them that leaned on his bosom: and doubtless he will not treat his disciples with less freedom and endearment in heaven. He will not keep them at a greater distance for his being in a state of exaltation; but he will rather take them into a state of exaltation with him. This will be the improvement Christ will make of his own glory, to make his beloved friends partakers with him, to glorify them in his glory, as he says to his Father, John 17:22, 23. "*And the glory which thou hast given me, have I given them, that they may be one, even as we are one I in*

them" etc. We are to consider, that though Christ is greatly exalted, yet he is exalted, not as a private person for himself only, but as his people's head; he is exalted in their name, and upon their account, as the first fruits, and as representing the whole harvest. He is not exalted that he may be at a greater distance from them, but that they may be exalted with him. The exaltation and honor of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members, but the members have the same relation and union with the head they had before, and are honored with the head; and instead of the distance being greater, the union shall be nearer and more perfect. When believers get to heaven, Christ will conform them to himself, as he is set down in his Father's throne, so they shall sit down with him on his throne, and shall in their measure be made like him.

When Christ was going to heaven, he comforted his disciples with the thought, that after a while, he would come again and take them to himself, that they might be with him. And we are not to suppose that when the disciples got to heaven, they found him keeping a greater distance than he used to do. No, doubtless, be embraced them as friends, and welcomed them to his and their Father's house, and to his and their glory. They who had been his friends in this world, who had been together with him here, and had together partaken of sorrows and troubles, are now welcomed by him to rest, and to partake of glory with him. He took them and led them into his chambers, and showed them all his glory; as he prayed, John 17:24. "*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me.*" And he led them to his living fountains of waters, and made them partake of his delights, as he prays John 17:13. "*That my joy may be fulfilled in themselves,*" and set them down with him at his table in his kingdom, and made them partake with him of his dainties, according to his promise, Luke 22:30, and led them into his banqueting house, and

made them to drink new wine with him in the kingdom of his heavenly Father, as he foretold them when he instituted the Lord's supper, Matt. 26:29.

Yea the saints' conversation with Christ in heaven shall not only be as intimate, and their access to him as free, as of the disciples on earth, but in many respects much more so; for in heaven, that vital union shall be perfect, which is exceeding imperfect here. While the saints are in this world, there are great remains of sin and darkness to separate or disunite them from Christ, which shall then all be removed. This is not a time for that full acquaintance, and those glorious manifestations of love, which Christ designs for his people hereafter; which seems to be signified by his speech to Mary Magdalene, when ready to embrace him, when she met him after his resurrection; John 20:17. "*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father*."

When the saints shall see Christ's glory and exaltation in heaven, it will indeed possess their hearts with the greater admiration and adoring respect, but it will not awe them into any separation, but will serve only to heighten their surprise and joy, when they find Christ condescending to admit them to such intimate access, and so freely and fully communicating himself to them. So that if we choose Christ for our friend and portion, we shall hereafter be so received to him, that there shall be nothing to hinder the fullest enjoyment of him, to the satisfying the utmost cravings of our souls. We may take our full swing at gratifying our spiritual appetite after these holy pleasures. Christ will then say, as in Cant. 5:1. "*Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly O beloved*." And this shall be our entertainment to all eternity! There shall never be any end of this happiness, or any thing to interrupt our enjoyment of it, or in the least to molest us in it!

2. By your being united to Christ, you will have a more

glorious union with and enjoyment of God the Father, than otherwise could be. For hereby the saints' relation to God becomes much nearer; they are the children of God in a higher manner than otherwise could be. For, being members of God's own Son, they are in a sort partakers of his relation to the Father: they are not only sons of God by regeneration, but by a kind of communion in the sonship of the eternal Son. This seems to be intended, Gal. 4:4-6. "*God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*." The church is the daughter of God not only as he hath begotten her by his word and Spirit but as she is the spouse of his eternal Son.

So we being members of the Son, are partakers in our measure of the Father's love to the Son, and complacence in him. John 17:23. "*I in them, and thou in me, -- Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me*." And ver. 26. "*That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them*." And chap. 16:27. "*The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*." So we shall, according to our capacities, be partakers of the Son's enjoyment of God, and have his joy fulfilled in ourselves, John 17:13. And by this means we shall come to an immensely higher, more intimate and full enjoyment of God, than otherwise could have been. For there is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son which is expressed by his being in the bosom of the Father. And saints being in him, shall, in their measure and manner, partake with him in it, and of the blessedness of it.

And thus is the affair of our redemption ordered, that thereby we are brought to an immensely more exalted kind of union with God, and enjoyment of him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been. For Christ

being united to the human nature, we have advantage for a more free and full enjoyment of him, than we could have had if he had remained only in the divine nature. So again, we being united to a divine person, as his members, can have a more intimate union and intercourse with God the Father, who is only in the divine nature, than otherwise could be. Christ, who is a divine person, by taking on him our nature, descends from the infinite distance and height above us, and is brought nigh to us; whereby we have advantage for the full enjoyment of him. And, on the other hand, we, by being in Christ a divine person, do as it were ascend up to God, through the infinite distance, and have hereby advantage for the full enjoyment of him also.

This was the design of Christ, that he, and his Father, and his people, might all be united in one. John 17:21 23. "*That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee -- that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*" Christ has brought it to pass, that those whom the Father has given him should be brought into the household of God, that he and his Father, and his people, should be as one society, one family; that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity.

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Safety, Fullness, and Sweet Refreshment in Christ

And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a

covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. [Isaiah 32:3]

In these words we may observe,

1. The person who is here prophesied of and commended, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, the King spoken of in the preceding verse, who shall reign in righteousness. This King is abundantly prophesied of in the Old Testament, and especially in this prophecy of Isaiah. Glorious predictions were from time to time uttered by the prophets concerning that great King who was to come: there is no subject which is spoken of in so magnificent and exalted a style by the prophets of the Old Testament, as the Messiah. They saw his day and rejoiced, and searched diligently, together with the angels, into those things. I Peter 1:11, 12. "Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

We are told here that "a man shall be a hiding-place from the wind," &c. There is an emphasis in the words, that "a man" should be this. If these things had been said of God, it would not be strange under the Old Testament; for God is frequently called a hiding-place for his people, a refuge in time of trouble, a strong rock, and a high tower. But what is so remarkable is, that they are said of "a man." But this is a prophecy of the Son of God incarnate.

2. The things here foretold of him, and the commendations given him. "He shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest:" that is, he shall be the safety and defence of his people, to which they shall flee for protection in the time of their danger and trouble. To him they shall flee, as one who is abroad, and sees a terrible storm arising, makes haste to some shelter to secure himself; so that however furious is the tempest, yet he is safe within, and the wind and

rain, though they beat never so impetuously upon the roof and walls, are no annoyance unto him.

He shall be as "rivers of water in a dry place." This is an allusion to the deserts of Arabia, which was an exceedingly hot and dry country. One may travel there many days, and see no sign of a river, brook, or spring, nothing but a dry and parched wilderness; so that travelers are ready to be consumed with thirst, as the children of Israel were when they were in this wilderness, when they were faint because there was no water. Now when a man finds Jesus Christ, he is like one that has been traveling in those deserts till he is almost consumed with thirst, and who as last finds a river of cool and clear water. And Christ was typified by the river of water that issued out of the rock for the children of Israel in this desert: he is compared to a river, because there is such a plenty and fulness in him.

He is the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Allusion is still made to the desert of Arabia. It is not said, as the shadow of a tree, because in some places of that country, there is nothing but dry sand and rocks for a vast space together, not a tree to be seen; and the sun beats exceedingly hot upon the sands, and all the shade to be found there, where travellers can rest and shelter themselves from the scorching sun, is under some great rock. They who come to Christ find such rest and refreshment as the weary traveller in that hot and desolate country finds under the shadow of a great rock.

We propose to speak to three propositions that are explicatory of the several parts of the text.

I. There is in Christ Jesus abundant foundation of peace and safety for those who are in fear and danger. "A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest."

II. There is in Christ provision for the satisfaction, and full contentment, of the needy and thirsty soul. He shall be "as rivers of water in a dry place."

III. There are quiet rest and sweet refreshment in Christ Jesus

for him who is weary. He shall be "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

I. There is in Christ Jesus abundant foundation of peace and safety for those who are in fear and danger.

The fears and dangers to which men are subject, are of two kinds; temporal and eternal. Men are frequently in distress from fear of temporal evils. We live in an evil world, where we are liable to an abundance of sorrows and calamities. A great part of our lives is spent in sorrowing for present or past evils, and in fearing those which are future. What poor, distressed creatures are we, when God is pleased to send his judgements among us! If he visits a place with mortal and prevailing sickness, what terror seizes our hearts! If any person is taken sick, and trembles for his life, or if our near friends are at the point of death, or in many other dangers, how fearful is our condition! Now there is sufficient foundation for peace and safety to those exercised with such fears, and brought into such dangers. But Christ is a refuge in all trouble; there is a foundation for rational support and peace in him, whatever threatens us. He, whose heart is fixed, trusting in Christ, need not be afraid of any evil tidings. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Christ is round about them that fear him."

But it is the other kind of fear and danger to which we have a principal respect; the fear and danger of God's wrath. The fears of a terrified conscience, the fearful expectation of the dire fruits of sin, and the resentment of an angry God, these are infinitely the most dreadful. If men are in danger of those things, and are not asleep, they will be more terrified than with the fears of any outward evil. Men are in a most deplorable condition, as they are by nature exposed to God's wrath; and if they are sensible how dismal their case is, will be in dreadful fears and dismal expectations.

God is pleased to make some sensible of their true condition. He lets them see the storm that threatens them, how black the clouds are, and how impregnated with thunder, that it is a burning tempest, that they are in danger of being speedily overtaken by it, that they have nothing to shelter themselves from it, and that they are in danger of being taken

away by the fierceness of his anger.

It is a fearful condition when one is smitten with a sense of the dreadfulness of God's wrath, when he has his heart impressed with the conviction that the great God is not reconciled to him, that he holds him guilty of these and those sins, and that he is angry enough with him to condemn him for ever. It is dreadful to lie down and rise up, it is dreadful to eat and drink, and to walk about, in God's anger from day to day. One, in such a case, is ready to be afraid of every thing; he is afraid of meeting God's wrath wherever he goes. He has no peace in his mind, but there is a dreadful sound in his ears; his mind is afflicted and tossed with tempest, and not comforted, and courage is ready to fail, and the spirit ready to sink with fear; for how can a poor worm bear the wrath of the great God, and what would not he give for peace of conscience, what would not he give if he could find safety! When such fears exist to a great degree, or are continued a long time, they greatly enfeeble the heart, and bring it to a trembling posture and disposition.

Now for such as these there is abundant foundation for peace and safety in Jesus Christ, and this will appear from the following things:

1. Christ has undertaken to save all such from what they fear, if they come to him. It is his professional business; the work in which he engaged before the foundation of the world. It is what he always had in his thoughts and intentions; he undertook from everlasting to be the refuge of those that are afraid of God's wrath. His wisdom is such, that he would never undertake a work for which he is not sufficient. If there were some in so dreadful a case that he was not able to defend them, or so guilty that it was not fit that he should save them, then he never would have undertaken for them. Those who are in trouble and distressing fear, if they come to Jesus Christ, have this to ease them of their fears, that Christ has promised them that he will protect them; that they come upon his invitation; that Christ has plighted his faith for their security if they will close with him; and that he is engaged by covenant to God the Father that he will save those afflicted and distressed souls that come to him.

Christ, by his own free act, has made himself the surety of such, he has voluntarily put himself in their stead; and if justice has any thing against

them, he has undertaken to answer for them. By his own act, he has engaged to be responsible for them; so that if they have exposed themselves to God's wrath, and to the stroke of justice, it is not their concern, but his, how to answer or satisfy for what they have done. Let there be never so much wrath that they have deserved, they are as safe as if they never had deserved any; because he has undertaken to stand for them, let it be more or less. If they are in Christ Jesus, the storm does of course light on him, and not on them; as when we are under a good shelter, the storm, that would otherwise come upon our heads, lights upon the shelter.

2. He is chosen and appointed of the Father to this work. There needs to be no fear nor jealousy, whether the Father will approve of this undertaking of Christ Jesus, whether he will accept of him as a surety, or whether he will be willing that his wrath should be poured upon his own dear Son, instead of us miserable sinners. For there was an agreement with him concerning it before the world was; it was a thing much upon God's heart, that his Son Jesus Christ should undertake this work, and it was the Father that sent him into the world. It is as much the act of God the Father as it is of the Son. Therefore, when Christ was near the time of his death, he tells the Father that he had finished the work which he gave him to do. Christ is often called God's elect, or his chosen, because he was chosen by the Father for his work; and God's anointed, for the words Messiah and Christ signify anointed, because he is by God appointed and fitted for this work.

3. If we are in Christ Jesus, justice and the law have its course with respect to our sins, without our hurt. The foundation of the sinner's fear and distress is the justice and the law of God; they are against him, and they are unalterable, they must have their course. Every jot and tittle of the law must be fulfilled, heaven and earth shall be destroyed, rather than justice should not take place; there is no possibility of sin's escaping justice.

But yet if the distressed trembling soul who is afraid of justice, would fly to Christ, he would be a safe hiding-place. Justice and the threatening of the law will have their course as fully, while he is safe and untouched, as if he were to be eternally destroyed. Christ bears the stroke of justice, and

the curse of the law falls fully upon him; Christ bears all that vengeance that belongs to the sin that has been committed by him, and there is no need of its being borne twice over. His temporal sufferings, by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, are fully equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a mere creature. And then his sufferings answer for him who flees to him as well as if they were his own, for indeed they are his own by virtue of the union between Christ and him. Christ has made himself one with them; he is the head, and they are the members. Therefore, if Christ suffers for the believer, there is no need of his suffering; and what needs he to be afraid? His safety is not only consistent with absolute justice, but it is consistent with the tenor of the law. The law leaves fair room for such a thing as the answering of a surety. If the end of punishment in maintaining the authority of the law and the majesty of the government is fully secured by the sufferings of Christ as his surety, then the law of God, according to the true and fair interpretation of it, has its course as much in the sufferings of Christ, as it would have in his own sufferings. The threatening, "thou shalt surely die," is properly fulfilled in the death of Christ, as it is fairly to be understood. Therefore if those who are afraid will go to Jesus Christ, they need to fear nothing from the threatening of the law. The threatening of the law has nothing to do with them.

4. Those who come to Christ, need not be afraid of God's wrath for their sins; for God's honour will not suffer by their escaping punishment and being made happy. The wounded soul is sensible that he has affronted the majesty of God, and looks upon God as a vindicator of his honour; as a jealous God that will not be mocked, an infinitely great God that will not bear to be affronted, that will not suffer his authority and majesty to be trampled on, that will not bear that his kindness should be abused. A view of God in this light terrifies awakened souls. They think how exceedingly they have sinned, how they have sinned against light, against frequent and long-continued calls and warnings; and how they have slighted mercy, and been guilty of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, taking encouragement from God's mercy to go on in sin against him; and they fear that God is so affronted at the contempt and slight which they have cast upon him, that he, being careful of his honour, will never forgive them, but will punish them. But if they go to Christ, the honour of God's majesty and authority will not be in the least hurt by

their being freed and made happy. For what Christ has done has repaired God's honour to the full. It is a greater honour to God's authority and majesty, that, rather than it should be wronged, so glorious a person would suffer what the law required. It is surely a wonderful display of the honour of God's majesty, to see an infinite and eternal person dying for its being wronged. And then Christ by his obedience, by that obedience which he undertook for our sakes, has honoured God abundantly more than the sins of any of us have dishonoured him, how many soever, and how great soever. How great an honour is it to God's law that so great a person is willing to submit to it, and to obey it! God hates our sins, but not more than he delights in Christ's obedience which he performed on account. This is a sweet savour to him, a savour of rest. God is abundantly compensated, he desires no more; Christ's righteousness is of infinite worthiness and merit.

5. Christ is a person so dear to the Father, that those who are in Christ need not be at all jealous of being accepted upon his account. If Christ is accepted they must of consequence be accepted, for they are in Christ, as members, as parts, as the same. They are the body of Christ, his flesh and his bones. They that are in Christ Jesus, are one spirit; and therefore, if God loves Christ Jesus, he must of necessity accept of those that are in him, and that are of him. But Christ is a person exceedingly dear to the Father, the Father's love to the Son is really infinite. God necessarily loves the Son; God could as soon cease to be, as cease to love the Son. He is God's elect, in whom his soul delighteth; he is his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; he loved him before the foundation of the world, and had infinite delight in him from all eternity.

A terrified conscience, therefore, may have rest here, and abundant satisfaction that he is safe in Christ, and that there is not the least danger but that he shall be accepted, and that God will be at peace with him in Christ.

6. God has given an open testimony that Christ has done and suffered enough, and that he is satisfied with it, by his raising him from the dead. Christ, when he was in his passion, was in the hands of justice, he was God's prisoner for believers, and it pleased God to bruise him, and put him to grief, and to bring him into a low state; and when he raised him

from the dead, he set him at liberty, whereby he declared that it was enough. If God was not satisfied, why did he set Christ at liberty so soon? he was in the hands of justice, why did not God pour out more wrath upon him, and hold him in the chains of darkness longer? God raised him up and opened the prison doors to him, because he desired no more. And now surely there is free admittance for all sinners into God's favour through this risen Saviour, there is enough done, and God is satisfied; as he has declared and sealed to it by the resurrection of Christ, who is alive, and lives for evermore, and is making intercession for poor, distressed souls that come unto him.

7. Christ has the dispensation of safety and deliverance in his own hands, so that we need not fear but that, if we are united to him, we may be safe. God has given him all power in heaven and in earth, to give eternal life to whomsoever comes to him. He is made head over all things to the church, and the work of salvation is left with himself, he may save whom he pleases, and defend those that are in him by his own power. What greater ground of confidence could God have given us than that the Mediator, who died for us, and intercedes for us, should have committed to him the dispensation of the very thing which he died to purchase and for which he intercedes?

8. Christ's love, and compassion, and gracious disposition, are such that we may be sure he is inclined to receive all who come to him. If he should not do it, he would fail of his own undertaking, and also of his promise to the Father, and to us; and his wisdom and faithfulness will not allow of that. But he is so full of love and kindness that he is disposed to nothing but to receive and defend us, if we come to him. Christ is exceedingly ready to pity us, his arms are open to receive us, he delights to receive distressed souls that come to him, and to protect them; he would gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; it is a work that he exceedingly rejoices in, because he delights in acts of love, and pity, and mercy.

I shall take occasion from what now has been said, to invite those who are afraid of God's wrath, to come to Christ Jesus. You are indeed in a dreadful condition. It is dismal to have God's wrath impending over our heads, and not to know how soon it will fall upon us. And you are in some

measure sensible that it is a dreadful condition, you are full of fear and trouble, and you know not where to flee for help; your mind is, as it were, tossed with a tempest. But how lamentable is it, that you should spend your life in such a condition, when Christ would shelter you, as a hen shelters her chickens under her wings, if you were but willing; and that you should live such a fearful, distressed life, when there is so much provision made for your safety in Christ Jesus!

How happy would you be if your hearts were but persuaded to close with Jesus Christ! Then you would be out of all danger: whatever storms and tempests were without, you might rest securely within; you might hear the rushing of the wind, and the thunder roar abroad, while you are safe in this hiding-place. O be persuaded to hide yourself in Christ Jesus! What greater assurance of safety can you desire? He has undertaken to defend and save you, if you will come to him: he looks upon it as his work; he engaged in it before the world was, and he has given his faithful promise which he will not break; and if you will but make your flight there, his life shall be for yours; he will answer for you, you shall have nothing to do but rest quietly in him; you may stand still and see what the Lord will do for you. If there be any thing to suffer, the suffering is Christ's, you will have nothing to suffer; if there be any thing to be done, the doing of it is Christ's, you will have nothing to do but to stand still and behold it.

You will certainly be accepted of the Father if your soul lays hold of Jesus Christ. Christ is chosen and anointed of the Father, and sent forth for this very end, to save those that are in danger and fear; and he is greatly beloved of God, even infinitely, and he will accept of those that are in him. Justice and the law will not be against you, if you are in Christ; that threatening, "in the day that thou eatest thou shalt die," in the proper sense of it, will not touch you. The majesty and honour of God are not against you. You need not be afraid but that you shall be justified, if you come to him; there is an act of justification already past and declared for all who come to Christ by the resurrection of Christ, and as soon as ever you come, you are by that declared free. If you come to Christ it will be a sure sign that Christ loved you from all eternity, and that he died for you; and you may be sure if he died for you, he will not lose the end of his

death, for the dispensation of life is committed unto him.

You need not, therefore, continue in so dangerous a condition; there is help for you. You need not stand out in the storm so long, as there is so good a shelter near you, whose doors are open to receive you. O make haste, therefore, unto that man who is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!

Let this truth also cause believers more to prize the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider that it is he, and he only, who defends you from wrath, and that he is a safe defence; your defence is a high tower; your city of refuge is impregnable. There is no rock like your rock. There is none like Christ, "the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky; the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are everlasting arms." He in whom you trust is a buckler to all that trust in him. O prize that Saviour, who keeps your soul in safety, while thousands of others are carried away by the fury of God's anger, and are tossed with raging and burning tempests in hell! O, how much better is your case than theirs! and to whom is it owing but to the Lord Jesus Christ? Remember what was once your case, and what it is now, and prize Jesus Christ.

And let those christians who are in doubts and fears concerning their condition, renewedly fly to Jesus Christ, who is a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Most Christians are at times afraid whether they shall not miscarry at last. Such doubtings are always through some want of the exercise of faith, and the best remedy for them is a renewed resort of the soul to this hiding-place; the same act which at first gave comfort and peace, will give peace again. They that clearly see the sufficiency of Christ, and the safety of committing themselves to him to save them from what they fear, will rest in it that Christ will defend them; be directed therefore at such times to do as the psalmist. Psalm 56:3, 4. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

II. There is provision in Christ for the satisfaction and full contentment of the needy and thirsty soul.

This is the sense of those words in the text, "as rivers of water in a dry place," in a dry and parched wilderness, where there is a great want of water, and where travellers are ready to be destroyed with thirst, such as was that wilderness in which the children of Israel wandered. This comparison is used elsewhere in the Scriptures. Psalm 63:1. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Psalm 143:6. "I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land." Those who travel in such a land, who wander in such a wilderness, are in extreme need of water; they are ready to perish for the want of it; and thus they have a great thirst and longing for it.

It is said that Christ is a river of water, because there is such a fulness in him, so plentiful a provision for the satisfaction of the needy and longing soul. When one is extremely thirsty, though it is not a small draught of water will satisfy him, yet when he comes to a river, he finds a fulness, there he may drink full draughts. Christ is like a river, in that he has a sufficiency not only for one thirsty soul, but by supplying him the fountain is not lessened; there is not the less afforded to those who come afterwards. A thirsty man does not sensibly lessen a river by quenching his thirst.
Christ is like a river in another respect. A river is continually flowing, there are fresh supplies of water coming from the fountain-head continually, so that a man may live by it, and be supplied with water all his life. So Christ is an ever-flowing fountain; he is continually supplying his people, and the fountain is not spent. They who live upon Christ, may have fresh supplies from him to all eternity; they may have an increase of blessedness that is new, and new still, and which never will come to an end.

In illustrating this second proposition, I shall inquire,

1. What it is that the soul of every man naturally and necessarily craves.

First. The soul of every man necessarily craves happiness. This is an universal appetite of human nature, that is alike in the good and the bad; it is as universal as the very essence of the soul, because it necessarily and

immediately flows from that essence. It is not only natural to all mankind, but to the angels; it is universal among all reasonable, intelligent beings, in heaven, earth, or hell, because it flows necessarily from an intelligent nature. There is no rational being, nor can there be any, without a love and desire of happiness. It is impossible that there should be any creature made that should love misery, or not love happiness, since it implies a manifest contradiction; for the very notion of misery is to be in a state that nature abhors, and the notion of happiness, is to be in such a state as is most agreeable to nature.

Therefore, this craving of happiness must be insuperable, and what never can be changed; it never can be overcome, or in any way abated. Young and old love happiness alike, and good and bad, wise and unwise; though there is a great variety as to men's ideas of happiness. Some think it is to be found in one thing, and some in another; yet, as to the desire of happiness in general, there is no variety. There are particular appetites that may be restrained, and kept under, and conquered, but this general appetite for happiness nev-er can be.

Secondly. The soul of every man craves a happiness that is equal to the capacity of his nature. The soul of man is like a vessel; the capacity of the soul is as the largeness or contents of the vessel. And therefore, if man has much pleasure and happiness, yet if the vessel is not full, the craving will not cease. Every creature is restless till it enjoys what is equal to the capacity of its nature. Thus we may observe in the brutes; when they have that which is suitable to their nature, and proportional to their capacity, they are contented. Man is of such a nature, that he is capable of an exceedingly great degree of happiness; he is made of a vastly higher nature than the brutes, and therefore he must have vastly higher happiness to satisfy. The pleasures of the outward senses which content the beasts, will not content man. He has other faculties of a higher nature that stand in need of something to fill them; if the sense be satiated, yet if the faculties of the soul are not filled, man will be in a craving restless state.

It is more especially by reason of the faculty of understanding that the soul is capable of so great a happiness, and desires so much. The understanding is an exceedingly extensive faculty; it extends itself beyond

the limits of earth, beyond the limits of the creation. As we are capable of understanding immensely more than we do understand, who can tell how far the understanding of men is capable of stretching itself? and as the understanding enlarges, the desire will enlarge with it. It must therefore be an incomprehensible object that must satisfy the soul; it will never be contented with that, and that only, to which it can see an end, it will never be satisfied with that happiness to which it can find a bottom. A man may seem to take contentment for a little while in a finite object, but after he has had a little experience, he finds that he wants something besides. This is very apparent from the experience of this restless craving world. Every one is inquiring, Who will show us any good?

2. Men in their fallen state, are in very great want of this happiness. They were once in the enjoyment of it, but mankind are sunk to a very low estate; we are naturally poor, destitute creatures. We came naked into the world, and our souls as well as our bodies are in a wretched, miserable condition; we are so far from having food to eat suitable to our nature, that we are greedy after the husks which the swine do eat.

The poverty of man in a natural condition, appears in his discontented, craving spirit; it shows that the soul is very empty, when, like the horse-leech, it cries, "Give, give, and saith not, It is enough." We are naturally like the prodigal, for we once were rich, but we departed from our father's house, and have squandered away our wealth, and are become poor, hungry, famishing wretches. Men in a natural condition may find something to gratify their senses, but there is nothing to feed the soul; that more noble and more essential part perishes for lack of food. They may fare sumptuously every day, they may pamper their bodies, but the soul cannot be fed from a sumptuous table; they may drink wine in bowls, yet the spiritual part is not refreshed. The superior faculties want to be supplied as well as the inferior. True poverty and true misery consist in the want of those things of which our spiritual part stands in need.

3. Those sinners who are thoroughly awakened, are sensible of their great want. Multitudes of men are not sensible of their miserable, needy condition. There are many who are thus poor, and think themselves rich, and increased in goods. Indeed there are no natural men that have true contentment: they are all restless, and crying, "Who will show us any

good?" but multitudes are not sensible how exceedingly necessitous is their condition. But the thoroughly awakened soul sees that he is very far from true happiness, that those things which he possesses will never make him happy; that for all his outward possessions he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. He becomes sensible of the short continuance and uncertainty of those things, and their insufficiency to satisfy a troubled conscience. He wants something else to give him peace and ease. If you would tell him that he might have a kingdom, it would not quiet him; he desires to have his sins pardoned, and to be at peace with his Judge. He is poor, and he becomes as a beggar; he comes and cries for help. He does not thirst, because he as yet sees where true happiness is to be found, but because he sees that he has it not, and cannot find it. He is without comfort, and does not know where to find it, but he longs for it. O, what would he not give, if he could find some satisfying peace and comfort!

Such are those hungry, thirsty souls that Christ so often invites to come to him. Isaiah 55:1, 2. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; and he that is athirst, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

4. There is in Christ Jesus provision for the full satisfaction and contentment of such as these.

First. The excellency of Christ is such, that the discovery of it is exceedingly contenting and satisfying to the soul. The inquiry of the soul is after that which is most excellent. The carnal soul imagines that earthly things are excellent; one thinks riches most excellent, another has the highest esteem of honour, and to another carnal pleasure appears the most excellent; but the soul cannot find contentment in any of these things, because it soon finds an end to their excellency. Worldly men imagine, that there is true excellency and true happiness in those things which they are pursuing. They think that if they could but obtain them,

they should be happy; and when they obtain them, and cannot find happiness, they look for happiness in something else, and are still upon the pursuit.

But Christ Jesus has true excellency, and so great excellency, that when they come to see it they look no further, but the mind rests there. It sees a transcendent glory and an ineffable sweetness in him; it sees that till now it has been pursuing shadows, but that now it has found the substance; that before it had been seeking happiness in the stream, but that now it has found the ocean. The excellency of Christ is an object adequate to the natural cravings of the soul, and is sufficient to fill the capacity. It is an infinite excellency, such an one as the mind desires, in which it can find no bounds; and the more the mind is used to it, the more excellent it appears. Every new discovery makes this beauty appear more ravishing, and the mind sees no end; here is room enough for the mind to go deeper and deeper, and never come to the bottom. The soul is exceedingly ravished when it first looks on this beauty, and it is never weary of it. The mind never has any satiety, but Christ's excellency is always fresh and new, and tends as much to delight, after it has been seen a thousand or ten thousand years, as when it was seen the first moment. The excellency of Christ is an object suited to the superior faculties of man, it is suited to entertain the faculty of reason and understanding, and there is nothing so worthy about which the understanding can be employed as this excellency; no other object is so great, noble, and exalted.

This excellency of Jesus Christ is the suitable food of the rational soul. The soul that comes to Christ, feeds upon this, and lives upon it; it is that bread which came down from heaven, of which he that eats shall not die; it is angels' food, it is that wine and milk that is given without money, and without price. This is that fatness in which the believing soul delights itself; here the longing soul may be satisfied, and the hungry soul may be filled with goodness. The delight and contentment that is to be found here, passeth understanding, and is unspeakable and full of glory. It is impossible for those who have tasted of this fountain, and know the sweetness of it, ever to forsake it. The soul has found the river of water of life, and it desires no other drink; it has found the tree of life, and it desires no other fruit.

Secondly. The manifestation of the love of Christ gives the soul abundant contentment. This love of Christ is exceedingly sweet and satisfying, it is better than life, because it is the love of a person of such dignity and excellency. The sweetness of his love depends very much upon the greatness of his excellency; so much the more lovely the person, so much the more desirable is his love. How sweet must the love of that person be, who is the eternal Son of God, who is of equal dignity with the Father! How great a happiness must it be to be the object of the love of him who is the Creator of the world, and by whom all things consist, and who is exalted at God's right hand, and made head over principalities and powers in heavenly places, who has all things put under his feet, and is King of kings and Lord of lords, and is the brightness of the Father's glory! Surely to be beloved by him, is enough to satisfy the soul of a worm of the dust.

This love of Christ is also exceedingly sweet and satisfying from the greatness of it; it is a dying love; such love as never was before seen, and such as no other can parallel. There have been instances of very great love between one earthly friend and another; there was a surpassing love between David and Jonathan. But there never was any such love as Christ has towards believers. The satisfying nature of this love arises also from the sweet fruits of it. Those precious benefits that Christ bestows upon his people, and those precious promises which he has given them, are the fruit of this love; joy and hope are the constant streams that flow from this fountain, from the love of Christ.

Thirdly. There is provision for the satisfaction and contentment of the thirsty longing soul in Christ, as he is the way to the Father; not only from the fulness of excellency and grace which he has in his own person, but as by him we may come to God, may be reconciled to him, and may be made happy in his favour and love. The poverty and want of the soul in its natural state consist in its being separated from God, for God is the riches and the happiness of the creature. But we naturally are alienated from God; and God is alienated from us, our Maker is not at peace with us. But in Christ there is a way for a free communication between God and us; for us to come to God, and for God to communicate himself to us by his Spirit. John 14:6. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and

the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Ephesians 2:13, 18, 19. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Christ by being thus the way to the Father, is the way to true happiness and contentment. John 10:9. "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Hence I would take occasion to invite needy, thirsty souls to come to Jesus. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." You that have not yet come to Christ, are in a poor, necessitous condition; you are in a parched wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. And if you are thoroughly awakened, you are sensible that you are in distress and ready to faint for want of something to satisfy your souls. Come to him who is "as rivers of water in a dry place." There are plenty and fulness in him; he is like a river that is always flowing, you may live by it for ever, and never be in want. Come to him who has such excellency as is sufficient to give full contentment to your soul, who is a person of transcendent glory, and ineffable beauty, where you may entertain the view of your soul for ever without weariness, and without being cloyed. Accept of the offered love of him who is the only-begotten Son of God, and his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. Through Christ, come to God the Father, from whom you have departed by sin. He is the way, the truth, and the life; he is the door, by which if any man enters he shall be saved.

III. There are quiet rest and sweet refreshment in Christ Jesus, for those that are weary. He is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The comparison that is used in the text is very beautiful and very significative. The dry, barren, and scorched wilderness of Arabia is a very lively representation of the misery that men have brought upon themselves by sin. It is destitute of any inhabitants but lions and tigers and fiery serpents; it is barren and parched, and without any river or spring; it is a land of drought, wherein there is seldom any rain, a land exceedingly hot and uncomfortable. The scorching sunbeams that are

ready to consume the spirits of travellers, are a fit representation of terror of conscience, and the inward sense of God's displeasure. And there being no other shade in which travellers may rest, but only here and there that of a great rock, it is a fit representation of Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us from our misery. Christ is often compared to a rock, because he is a sure foundation to builders, and because he is a sure bulwark and defence. They who dwell upon the top of a rock, dwell in a most defensible place; we read of those whose habitation is the munitions of rocks. He may also be compared to a rock, as he is everlasting and unchangeable. A great rock remains stedfast, unmoved, and unbroken by winds and storms from age to age; and therefore God chose a rock to be an emblem of Christ in the wilderness, when he caused water to issue forth for the children of Israel; and the shadow of a great rock is a most fit representation of the refreshment given to weary souls by Jesus Christ.

1. There is quiet rest and full refreshment in Christ for sinners that are weary and heavy laden with sin. Sin is the most evil and odious thing, as well as the most mischievous and fatal; it is the most mortal poison; it, above all things, hazards life, and endangers the soul, exposes to the loss of all happiness, and to the suffering of all misery, and brings the wrath of God. All men have this dreadful evil hanging about them, and cleaving fast to the soul, and ruling over it, and keeping it in possession, and under absolute command: it hangs like a viper to the heart, or rather holds it as a lion does his prey.

But yet there are multitudes, who are not sensible of their misery. They are in such a sleep that they are not very unquiet in this condition, it is not very burthensome to them, they are so sottish that they do not know what is their state, and what is like to become of them. But there are others who have their sense so far restored to them that they feel the pain, and see the approaching destruction, and sin lies like a heavy load upon their hearts; it is a load that lies upon them day and night, they cannot lay it down to rest themselves, but it continually oppresses them. It is bound fast unto them, and is ready to sink them down; it is a continual labour of heart, to support itself under this burden. Thus we read of them "that labour, and are heavy laden." Or rather, it is like the scorching heat in a dry wilderness, where the sun beats and burns all the

day long; where they have nothing to defend them; where they can find no shade to refresh themselves. If they lay themselves down to rest, it is like lying down in the hot sands, where there is nothing to keep off the heat.

Here it may be proper to inquire who are weary and heavy laden with sin; and in what sense a sinner may be weary and burdened with sin. Sinners are not wearied with sin from any dislike to it, or dislike of it. There is no sinner that is burdened with sin in the sense in which a godly man carries his indwelling sin, as his daily and greatest burden, because he loathes it, and longs to get rid of it; he would fain be at a great distance from it, and have nothing more to do with it; he is ready to cry out as Paul did, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The unregenerate man has nothing of this nature, for sin is yet his delight, he dearly loves it. If he be under convictions, his love to sin in general is not mortified, he loves it as well as ever, he hides it still as a sweet morsel under his tongue.

But there is a difference between being weary and burdened with sin, and being weary of sin. Awakened sinners are weary with sin, but not properly weary of it.

Therefore, they are only weary of the guilt of sin, the guilt that cleaves to their consciences is that great burden. God has put the sense of feeling into their consciences, that were before as seared flesh, and it is guilt that pains them. The filthiness of sin and its evil nature, as it is an offence to a holy, gracious, and glorious God, is not a burden to them. But it is the connexion between sin and punishment, between sin and God's wrath, that makes it a burden. Their consciences are heavy laden with guilt, which is an obligation to punishment; they see the threatening and curse of the law joined to their sins, and see that the justice of God and his vengeance are against them. They are burdened with their sins, not because there is any odiousness in them, but because there is hell in them. This is the sting of sin, whereby it stings the conscience, and distresses and wearies the soul.

The guilt of such and such great sins is upon the soul, and the man sees no way to get rid of it, but he has wearisome days and wearisome nights;

it makes him ready sometimes to say as the psalmist did, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." But when sinners come to Christ, he takes away that which was their burden, or their sin and guilt, that which was so heavy upon their hearts, that so distressed their minds.

First. He takes away the guilt of sin, from which the soul before saw no way how it was possible to be freed, and which, if it was not removed, led to eternal destruction. When the sinner comes to Christ, it is all at once taken away, and the soul is left free, it is lightened of its burden, it is delivered from its bondage, and is like a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler. The soul sees in Christ a way to peace with God, and a way by which the law may be answered, and justice satisfied, and yet he may escape; a wonderful way indeed, but yet a certain and a glorious one. And what rest does it give to the weary soul to see itself thus delivered, that the foundation of its anxieties and fears is wholly removed, and that God's wrath ceases, that it is brought into a state of peace with God, and that there is no more occasion to fear hell, but that it is for ever safe! How refreshing is it to the soul to be at once thus delivered of that which was so much its trouble and terror, and to be eased of that which was so much its burden! This is like coming to a cool shade after one has been travelling in a dry and hot wilderness, and almost fainting under the scorching heat. And then Christ also takes away sin itself, and mortifies that root of bitterness which is the cause of all the inward tumults and disquietudes that are in the mind, that make it like the troubled sea that cannot rest, and leaves it all calm. When guilt is taken away and sin is mortified, then the foundation of fear, and trouble, and pain is removed, and the soul is left in peace and serenity.

Secondly. Christ puts strength and a principle of new life into the weary soul that comes to him. The sinner, before he comes to Christ, is as a sick man that is weakened and brought low, and whose nature is consumed by some strong distemper: he is full of pain, and so weak that he cannot walk nor stand. Therefore, Christ is compared to a physician. "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick." When he comes and speaks the word, he puts a

principle of life into him that was before as dead: he gives a principle of spiritual life and the beginning of eternal life; he invigorates the mind with a communication of his own life and strength, and renews the nature and creates it again, and makes the man to be a new creature.

So that the fainting, sinking spirits are now revived, and this principle of spiritual life is a continual spring of refreshment, like a well of living water. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Christ gives his Spirit, that calms the mind, and is like a refreshing breeze of wind. He gives that strength whereby he lifts up the hands that hang down, and strengthens the feeble knees.

Thirdly. Christ gives to those who come to him such comfort and pleasure as are enough to make them forget all their former labour and travail. A little of true peace, a little of the joys of the manifested love of Christ, and a little of the true and holy hope of eternal life, are enough to compensate for all that toil and weariness, and to erase the remembrance of it from the mind. That peace which results from true faith passes understanding, and that joy is joy unspeakable. There is something peculiarly sweet and refreshing in this joy, that is not in other joys; and what can more effectually support the mind, or give a more rational ground of rejoicing, than a prospect of eternal glory in the enjoyment of God from God's own promise in Christ? If we come to Christ, we may not only be refreshed by resting in his shadow, but by eating his fruit: these things are the fruits of this tree. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."
Before proceeding to the next particular of this proposition, I would apply myself to those that are weary; to move them to repose themselves under Christ's shadow.

The great trouble of such a state, one would think, should be a motive to you to accept of an offer of relief, and remedy. You are weary, and doubtless would be glad to be at rest; but here you are to consider,

First**.** That there is no remedy but in Jesus Christ; there is nothing else

will give you true quietness. If you could fly into heaven, you would not find it there; if you should take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, in some solitary place in the wilderness, you could not fly from your burden. So that if you do not come to Christ, you must either continue still weary and burdened, or, which is worse, you must return to your old dead sleep, to a state of stupidity; and not only so, but you must be everlastingly wearied with God's wrath.

Second**.** Consider that Christ is a remedy at hand. You need not wish for the wings of a dove that you may fly afar off, and be at rest, but Christ is nigh at hand, if you were but sensible of it. Romans 10:6, 7, 8. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." There is no need of doing any great work to come at this rest; the way is plain to it; it is but going to it, it is but sitting down under Christ's shadow. Christ requires no money to purchase rest of him, he calls to us to come freely, and for nothing. If we are poor and have no money, we may come. Christ sent out his servants to invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. Christ does not want to be hired to accept of you, and to give you rest. It is his work as Mediator to give rest to the weary, it is the work that he was anointed for, and in which he delights. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Third**.** Christ is not only a remedy for your weariness and trouble, but he will give you an abundance of the contrary, joy and delight. They who come to Christ, do no only come to a resting-place after they have been wandering in a wilderness, but they come to a banqueting-house where they may rest, and where they may feast. They may cease from their former troubles and toils, and they may enter upon a course of delights and spiritual joys.

Christ not only delivers from fears of hell and of wrath, but he gives hopes

of heaven, and the enjoyment of God's love. He delivers from inward tumults and inward pain from that guilt of conscience which is as a worm gnawing within, and he gives delight and inward glory. He brings us out of a wilderness of pits, and drought, and fiery flying spirits; and he brings us into a pleasant land, a land flowing with milk and honey. He delivers us out of prison, and lifts us off from the dunghill, and he sets us among princes, and causes us to inherit the throne of glory. Wherefore, if any one is weary, if any is in prison, if any one is in captivity, if any one is in the wilderness, let him come to the blessed Jesus, who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Delay not, arise and come away.

2. There are quiet rest and sweet refreshment in Christ for God's people that are weary.

The saints themselves, while they remain in this imperfect state, and have so much remains of sin in their hearts, are liable still to many troubles and sorrows, and much weariness, and have often need to resort anew unto Jesus Christ for rest. I shall mention three cases wherein Christ is a sufficient remedy.

First. There is rest and sweet refreshment in Christ for those that are wearied with persecutions. It has been the lot of God's church in this world for the most part to be persecuted. It has had now and then some lucid intervals of peace and outward prosperity, but generally it has been otherwise. This has accorded with the first prophecy concerning Christ; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Those two seeds have been at enmity ever since the time of Abel. Satan has borne great malice against the church of God, and so have those that are his seed. And oftentimes God's people have been persecuted to an extreme degree, have been put to the most exquisite torments that wit or art could devise, and thousands of them have been tormented to death.

But even in such a case there are rest and refreshment to be found in Christ Jesus. When their cruel enemies have given them no rest in this world; when, as oftentimes has been the case, they could not flee, nor in any way avoid the rage of their adversaries, but many of them have been tormented gradually from day to day, that their torments might be

lengthened; still rest has been found even then in Christ. It has been often found by experience; the martyrs have often showed plainly that the peace and calm of their minds were undisturbed in the midst of the greatest bodily torment, and have sometimes rejoiced and sung praises upon the rack and in the fire. If Christ is pleased to send forth his Spirit to manifest his love, and speaks friendly to the soul, it will support it even in the greatest outward torment that man can inflict. Christ is the joy of the soul, and if the soul be but rejoiced and filled with divine light, such joy no man can take away; whatever outward misery there be, the spirit will sustain it.

Secondly. There is in Christ rest for God's people, when exercised with afflictions. If a person labour under great bodily weakness, or under some disease that causes frequent and strong pains, such things will tire out so feeble a creature as man. It may to such an one be a comfort and an effectual support to think, that he has a Mediator, who knows by experience what pain is; who by his pain has purchased eternal ease and pleasure for him; and who will make his brief sufferings to work out a far more exceeding delight, to be bestowed when he shall rest from his labours and sorrows.

If a person be brought into great straits as to outward subsistence, and poverty brings abundance of difficulties and extremities; yet it may be a supporting, refreshing consideration to such an one to think, that he has a compassionate Savior, who when upon earth, was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and who became poor to make him rich, and purchased for him durable riches, and will make his poverty work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

If God in his providence calls his people to mourn over lost relations, and if he repeats his stroke and takes away one after another of those that were dear to him; it is a supporting, refreshing consideration to think, that Christ has declared that he will be in stead of all relations unto those who trust in him. They are as his mother, and sister, and brother; he has taken them into a very near relation to himself: and in every other afflictive providence, it is a great comfort to a believing soul to think that he has an intercessor with God, that by him he can have access with confidence to the throne of grace, and that in Christ we have so many

great and precious promises, that all things shall work together for good, and shall issue in eternal blessedness. God's people, whenever they are scorched by afflictions as by hot sun-beams, may resort to him, who is as a shadow of a great rock, and be effectually sheltered, and sweetly refreshed.

Thirdly. There is in Christ quiet rest and sweet refreshment for God's people, when wearied with the buffetings of Satan. The devil, that malicious enemy of God and man, does whatever lies in his power to darken and hinder, and tempt God's people, and render their lives uncomfortable. Often he raises needless and groundless scruples, and casts in doubts, and fills the mind with such fear as is tormenting, and tends to hinder them exceedingly in the christian course; and he often raises mists and clouds of darkness, and stirs up corruption, and thereby fills the mind with concern and anguish, and sometimes wearies out the soul. So that they may say as the psalmist; "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

In such a case if the soul flies to Jesus Christ, they may find rest in him, for he came into the world to destroy Satan, and to rescue souls out of his hands. And he has all things put under his feet, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth, or things in hell, and therefore he can restrain Satan when he pleases. And that he is doubtless ready enough to pity us under such temptations, we may be assured, for he has been tempted and buffeted by Satan as well as we. He is able to succour those that are tempted, and he has promised that the will subdue Satan under his people's feet. Let God's people therefore, when they are exercised with any of those kinds of weariness, make their resort unto Jesus Christ for refuge and rest.

REFLECTIONS

1. We may here see great reason to admire the goodness and grace of God to us in our low estate, that he has so provided for our help and relief. We are by our own sin against God plunged into all sort of evil, and God has provided a remedy for us against every sort of evil, he has left us helpless in no calamity. We by our sin have exposed ourselves to wrath, to a

vindictive justice; but God has done very great things that we might be saved from that wrath; he has been at infinite cost that the law might be answered without our suffering. We by our sins have exposed ourselves to terror of conscience, in expectation of the dreadful storm of God's wrath; but God has provided for us a hiding-place from the storm, he bids us enter into his chambers, and hide ourselves from indignation. We by sin have made ourselves poor, needy creatures; but God has provided for us gold tried in the fire. We by sin have made ourselves naked; and when he passed by, he took notice of our want, and has provided us white raiment that we may be clothed. We have made ourselves blind, and God in mercy to us has provided eye-salve, that we may see. We have deprived ourselves of all spiritual food; we are like the prodigal son that perished with hunger, and would gladly have filled his belly with husks. God has taken notice of this our condition, and has provided for us a feast of fat things, and has sent forth his servants to invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. We by sin have brought ourselves into a dry and thirsty wilderness; but God was merciful, and took notice of our condition, and has provided for us rivers of water, water out of the rock. We by sin have brought upon ourselves a miserable slavery and bondage; God has made provision for our liberty. We have exposed ourselves to weariness; God has provided a resting-place for us. We by sin have exposed ourselves to many outward troubles and afflictions; God has pitied us, and in Christ has provided true comfort for us. We have exposed ourselves to our grand enemy, even Satan, to be tempted and buffeted by him; God has pitied, and has provided for us a Savior and Captain of salvation, who has overcome Satan, and is able to deliver us. Thus God has in Christ provided sufficiently for our help in all kinds of evils.

How ought we to bless God for this abundant provision he has made for us, poor and sinful as we were, who were so undeserving and so ungrateful. He made no such provision for the fallen angels, who are left without remedy in all the woes and miseries into which they are plunged.

2. We should admire the love of Christ to men, that he has thus given himself to be the remedy for all their evil, and a fountain of all good. Christ has given himself to us, to be all things to us that we need. We

want clothing, and Christ does not only give us clothing, but he gives himself to be our clothing, that we might put him on. Galatians 3:27. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Romans 13:14. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

We want food, and Christ has given himself to be our food; he has given his own flesh to be our meat, and his blood to be our drink, to nourish our soul. Thus Christ tells us that he is the bread which came down from heaven, and the bread of life. "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." In order to our eating of his flesh, it was necessary that he should be slain, as the sacrifices must be slain before they could be eaten; and such was Christ's love to us, that he consented to be slain, he went as a sheep to the slaughter, that he might give us his flesh to be food for our poor, famishing souls.

We are in need of a habitation; we by sin have, as it were, turned ourselves out of house and home; Christ has given himself to be the habitation of his people. Psalm 90:1. "Lord, thou has been our dwelling-place in all generations." It is promised to God's people that they should dwell in the temple of God for ever, and should go no more out; and we are told that Christ is the temple of the new Jerusalem.

Christ gives himself to his people to be all things to them that they need, and all things that make for their happiness. Colossians 3:11. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." And that he might be so, he has refused nothing that is needful to prepare him to be so.

When it was needful that he should be incarnate, he refused it not, but became man, and appeared in the form of a servant. When it was needful that he should be slain, he refused it not, but gave himself for us, and gave himself to us upon the cross.

Here is love for us to admire, for us to praise, and for us to rejoice in, with joy that is full of glory for ever.

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Jesus Christ Gloriously Exalted Above All Evil in the Work of Redemption

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." **-- 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26**

Subject: Our Lord Jesus Christ in the work of redemption gloriously appears above all evil.

The apostle in this chapter particularly opposes some among the Christian Corinthians who denied the resurrection of the dead and infested the church with their doctrine. There were two sorts of persons in that age who were especially great opposers of the doctrine of the resurrection. One among the *Jews* were the Sadducees, of whom we read, Acts 23:8. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, either angel or spirit. And we have the same account in other places. Among the *heathen* that were the chief opposers of this doctrine were their philosophers. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was not consistent with their philosophy, by the principles of which, it was impossible that one who was deprived of the habit of life, would ever receive it again. And therefore they ridiculed the doctrine when the apostle preached it among them at Athens. (Acts 17) Probably the church at Corinth received this corruption from the philosophers, and not the Sadducees. For Corinth was near to Athens, and the place of the chief resort of the philosophers of Greece.

The apostle, in opposing this error, first insists on Christ's resurrection from the dead, and next on the resurrection of all the saints at the end of

the world. And in the verses next before the text, shows how both are connected, or that one arises or follows from the other. And then adds, "then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Observe,

I. Here is one thing wherein appears the glory of that exaltation and dominion, that Christ has as our redeemer, *viz.* that it issues in the subjection of all enemies under his feet. It is not said all *his* enemies, possibly because those that shall be put under his feet are not only his enemies, but also the enemies of his Father and of his people. Their being *under his feet* denotes their being perfectly subdued, and his being gloriously exalted over them. It shall be thus with respect to God's and his, and his people's enemies universally, not one excepted; which universality is signified here two ways; *all enemies* — and the very *last enemy*: when there shall be but one enemy left, that shall also be put under his feet.

II. We may learn what is here meant by *enemies* by the particular instance here given as the *last* that shall be destroyed, *viz. death*. Which shows that by enemies, is not meant *persons* only, that set themselves in opposition to God and his people, but *evils*; whatever is against God and his people, and opposes Christ or his saints, whether they be persons or things.

SECTION I

How evil of all kinds has prevailed and highly exalted itself in the world.

Evil, of all kinds, has risen to an exceeding height in the world, and highly exalted itself against God, and Christ, and the church. — This will appear by the following particulars.

I. *Satan* has highly exalted himself, and greatly prevailed. He is vastly superior in his natural capacity and abilities to mankind. He was originally one of the highest rank of creatures, but proudly exalted himself in rebellion against God in heaven. We are told, that *pride* was

the condemnation of the devil. (1 Tim. 3:6) He became proud of his own superior dignity and mighty abilities, and the glory which his Creator had put upon him. And [he] probably thought it too much to submit to the Son of God, and attempted to exalt his throne above him. And he prevailed to draw away vast multitudes of the heavenly hosts into an open rebellion against God.

And after he was cast down from heaven, he proudly exalted himself in this world, and prevailed to do great things. By his subtle temptations he procured the fall of our first parents, and so brought about the ruin of their whole race. He procured their ruin in body and soul, and the death of both, and that they should be exposed to all manner of calamity in this world, and to eternal ruin hereafter. He so far prevailed, that he drew men off from the service of their Maker, and set up himself to be the god of this world. And in a little time, [he] drew the world into that almost universal corruption, which brought on the flood of water, but which it was destroyed. And after that, he drew on all nations, except the posterity of Jacob, from the worship of the true God, and darkened all the world with heathenism, and held them under this darkness for a great many ages, he himself being worshipped as God almost all over the world. The nations of the earth offered sacrifices to him and multitudes offered up their children. And during that time, he often so far prevailed against the people of God, that he had almost swallowed them up. The church was often brought to the very brink of ruin.

And when Christ himself appeared in the world, how did he exalt himself against him! And prevailed so far, as to influence men to hate and despise him all the days of his life. And at last he persuaded one of his own disciples to betray him. Accordingly, he was delivered into the hands of men, to be mocked, buffeted, spit upon, and treated with the greatest ignominy that unrestrained malice could devise. And at last procured that he should be put to the most cruel and ignominious kind of death. And since that, he has greatly exalted himself against the gospel and kingdom of Christ. He has procured that the church, for the most part, has been the subject of great persecution; has often brought it to the brink of utter destruction; has accomplished great works in setting up those great kingdoms of antichrist and Mahomet; and darkened great part of the

world, that was once enlightened with the gospel of Christ, with worse than heathen darkness. And he has infected the Christian world with multitudes of heresies and false ways of worship, and greatly promoted atheism and infidelity. Thus highly has the devil exalted himself against God and Christ, and the elect. And so far he prevailed.

II. *Guilt* is another evil which has come to a great height in the world. All guilt is an evil of a dreadful nature. The least degree of it is enough utterly to undo any creature. It is a thing that reaches unto heaven, and cries to God, and brings down his wrath. The guilt of any one sin is so terrible an evil that it prevails to bind over the guilty person to suffer everlasting burnings. And so is in some respect infinite, in that it obliges to that punishment which has no end. And so is infinitely terrible. But this kind of evil has risen to a most amazing height in this world. Where not only some persons are guilty, but all, in all nations and ages, are naturally guilty wretches. And they who live to act any time in the world, are not only guilty of one sin, but of thousands, and thousands of thousands. What multiplied and what aggravated sins are some men guilty of! What guilt lies on some particular persons! How much more on some particular populous cities! How much more still on this wicked world! How much does the guilt of the world transcend all account, all expression, all power of numbers or measures! And above all, how vast is the guilt of the world, in all ages, from the beginning to the end of it! To what a pitch has guilt risen! The world being, as it were, on every side, loaded with it, as with mountains heaped on mountains, above the clouds and stars of heaven.

And guilt, when it was imparted to Christ, greatly prevailed against him — though in himself innocent, and the eternal Son of God — even so as to hold him prisoner of justice for a while, and to open the flood-gates of God's wrath upon him, and bring his waves and billows over him.

III. *Corruption* and wickedness of heart is another thing that has risen to an exceeding height in the world. Sin has so far prevailed that it has become universal. All mere men are become sinful and corrupt creatures. Let us attend to St. Paul's description of the world (Rom. 3:9-18), "Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. As is written, There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become

unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." And not only is every one corrupt, but they are all over corrupt, in every power, faculty, and principle. Every part is depraved. Which is here represented by the several parts of the body being corrupt, as the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet. "Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood." And not only is every part corrupt, but exceeding corrupt, being possessed with dreadful principles of corruption. horribly evil dispositions and principles of sin, that may be represented by the poison of asps, which makes men like vipers and devils, principles of all uncleanness, pride, deceit, injustice, enmity, malice, blasphemy, murder. Here their *throats* are compared to an *open sepulcher,* and their *mouth* is said to be full of *cursing and bitterness,* and destruction and misery are said to be in their ways.

And there are those principles of sin not only that are very bad, but every kind. Here is no sort of wickedness, but there is a seed of it in men. And these seeds and principles have not only a being in men's hearts, but are there in great strength. They have the absolute possession and dominion over men so that they are *sold under sin.* Yea, wicked principles, and those only, are in the heart. *The imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil only.* There are bad principles only, and no good ones. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Thus the hearts of all men are *deceitful and desperately wicked* (Jer. 17:9).

And if we look, not only at the natural corruption of the heart, but at the contracted habits of sin, by wicked education and customs, how full shall we find the world of wickedness, in this respect! How have men, by bad customs in sinning, broken down all restraints upon natural corruption, and as it were abandoned themselves to wickedness! So far has corruption and wickedness prevailed in the world, and so high has it risen, that it is become a great and universal deluge, that overtops all things, and prevails with that strength, that it is like the raging waves of the tempestuous ocean, which are ready to bear down all before them.

IV. Many of the *devil's instruments* have greatly prevailed and have been exalted to an exceeding height in the world. It has been so in almost all

ages of the world. Many of the devil's instruments have prospered and prevailed till they have got to the head of great kingdoms and empires, with vast riches and mighty power. Those four great heathen monarchies that rose in the world before Christ are spoken of in Scripture as kingdoms set up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ. So they are represented in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:35, 36). These monarchies were exceeding powerful. The two last ruled over the greater part of the then known world. And the last especially, *viz.* the Roman empire, was exceeding mighty. So that it is said to be diverse from all kingdoms, and that it would devour the whole earth, and tread it down, and break it in pieces (Dan. 7:23). It is represented by the fourth beast, which was dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and had great iron teeth, that devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet (Dan. 7:7). These four kingdoms all persecuted the church of God in their turns, especially the last. One of the governors of this monarchy put Christ to death. And afterwards one emperor after another made dreadful havoc of the church, making a business of it, with the force of all the empire, to torment and destroy the Christians, endeavoring, if possible, to root out the Christian name from under heaven.

And in those latter ages, how have those two great instruments of the devil, *viz.* antichrist and Mahomet, prevailed, and to what a pitch of advancement have they arrived, ruling over vast empires, with mighty wealth, pride and power, so that the earth has been, as it were, subdued by them. Antichrist has set up himself as the vicar of Christ, and has for many ages usurped the power of God, "sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God; and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." And how dreadfully has he ravaged the church of God, being drunk with the blood of the saints, and the martyrs of Jesus. And has often, as it were, deluged the world in Christina blood, she with the utmost cruelty that human wit and malice could invent. — And at this day, many other instruments of the devil, many heretics, atheists, and other infidels, are exerting themselves against Christ and his church, with great pride and contempt.

V. *Affliction* and misery have also prevailed and risen to an unspeakable

height in the world. The spiritual misery which the elect are naturally in is great. They are miserable captives of sin and Satan, and under obligations to suffer eternal burnings. This misery all mankind are naturally in. And spiritual troubles and sorrows have often risen to a great height in the elect. The troubles of a wounded spirit and guilty conscience, have been felt with intolerable and insupportable weight. “A wounded spirit who can bear?” (Pro. 18:14). And the darkness that has risen to God’s people after conversion, through the temptations and buffetings of the devil, and the hidings of God’s face, and manifestations of his anger, have been very terrible. And temporal afflictions have often risen exceeding high. The church of God has, for the most part, all along, been a seat of great affliction and tribulation.

But the height to which the evil of affliction has risen, nowhere appears so much as in the afflictions that Christ suffered. The evil of affliction and sorrow exalted itself so high, as to seize the Son of God himself, and to cause him to be all in a bloody sweat, and to make his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It caused him to cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Affliction never prevailed to such a degree in this world, as in Christ, whose soul was, as it were, overwhelmed in an ocean of it.

VI. *Death* is an evil which has greatly prevailed and made dreadful havoc in this world. How does it waste and devour mankind, one age after another, sparing none, high or low, rich or poor, good or bad! Wild beasts have destroyed many. Many cruel princes have taken away the lives of thousands, and laid waste whole countries. But death devours all. None are suffered to escape. And the bodies of the saints as well as other, fall a prey to this great devourer. Yea, so high did this enemy rise, that he took hold on Christ himself, and swallowed him among the rest. He became the prey of this great, insatiable monster. By his means, was his bodily frame destroyed, and laid dead in the dark and silent grave. And death still goes on destroying thousands every day. And therefore the grave is one of those things which Agur says, never has enough (Pro. 30:16). — So have evils of every kind prevailed, and to such a degree have they exalted themselves in the world.

SECTION II

How Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption, appears gloriously above all these evils.

It was not the will of the infinitely wise and holy Governor of the world that things should remain in this confusion, this reign of evil, which had prevailed and exalted itself to such a height. But he had a design of subduing it, and delivering an elect part of the world from it, and exalting them to the possession of the greatest good, and to reign in the highest glory, out of a state of subjection to all these evils. And he chose his Son as the person most fit for an undertaking that was infinitely too great for any mere creature. And he has undertaken the work of our redemption. And though these evils are so many and so great, and have prevailed to such a degree, and have risen to such a height, and have been, as it were, all combined together; yet wherein they have exalted themselves, Christ, in the work of redemption, appears above them. He has gloriously prevailed against them all, and brings them under his feet, and rides forth, in the chariots of salvation, over their heads, or leading them in triumph at his chariot wheels. He appears in this work infinitely higher and mightier than they, and sufficient to carry his people above them, and utterly to destroy them all.

I. Christ appears gloriously above all evil in what he did to procure redemption for us in his state of *humiliation,* by the righteousness he wrought out, and the atonement he made for sin. The evils mentioned, never seemed so much to prevail against him as in his sufferings. But in them, the foundation was laid for their overthrow. In them he appeared above *Satan*. Though Satan never exalted himself so high, as he did in procuring these sufferings of Christ; yet, then, Christ laid the foundation for the utter overthrow of his kingdom. He slew Satan, as it were, with his own weapon, the spiritual David cut off this Goliath's head with his own sword, and he triumphed over him in his cross. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in *it*," (Col. 2:15) *i.e.* in his cross, mentioned in the preceding words. Then the wisdom of Christ appeared gloriously above the subtlety of Satan. Satan, that old serpent, used a great deal of subtlety to procure

Christ's death. And doubtless, when he had accomplished it, thought he had obtained a complete victory, being then ignorant of the contrivance of our redemption. But so did the wisdom of Christ order things that Satan's subtlety and malice should be made the very means of undermining the foundations of his kingdom. And so he wisely led him into the pit that he had dug.

In this also Christ appeared gloriously above the guilt of men. For he offered a sacrifice that was sufficient to do away all the guilt of the whole world. Though the guilt of man was like the great mountains, whose heads are lifted up to the heavens; yet his dying love, and his merits, appeared as a mighty deluge that overflowed the highest mountains, or like a boundless ocean that swallows them up, or like an immense fountain of light that with the fullness and redundancy of its brightness, swallows up men's greatest sins, as little motes are swallowed up and hidden in the disk of the sun.

In this Christ appeared above all the *corruption* of man, in that hereby he purchased holiness for the chief of sinners. And Christ in undergoing such extreme affliction, got the victory over all *misery*; and laid a foundation for its being utterly abolished, with respect to his elect. In dying he became the plague and destruction of death. When death slew him, it slew itself. For Christ, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil (Heb. 2:14). By this he laid the foundation of the glorious resurrection of all his people to an immortal life.

II. Christ appears gloriously exalted above all evil, in his *resurrection* and *ascension* into heaven. When Christ rose from the dead, then it appeared that he was above death, which, though it had taken him captive, could not hold him.

Then he appeared above the devil. Then this Leviathan that had swallowed him was forced to vomit him up again, as the Philistines that had taken captive the ark were forced to return it, Dagon being fallen before it, with his head and hands broken off, and only the stumps left. — Then he appeared above our guilt. For he was justified in his resurrection (Rom. 4:4, 25; 1 Tim. 3:16). In his resurrection he appeared above all affliction. For though he had been subject to much affliction and

overwhelmed in it, he then emerged out of it, as having gotten the victory, never to conflict with any more sorrow.

When he ascended up into heaven, he rose far above the reach of the devil and all his instruments, who had before had him in their hands. And now has he sat down at the right hand of God, as being made head over all things to the church, in order to a complete and perfect victory over sin, Satan, death, and all his enemies. It was then said to him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," (Psa. 110:1). He entered into a state of glory, wherein he is exalted far above all these evils, as the forerunner of his people, and to make intercession for them, till they also are brought to be with him, in like manner exalted above all evil.

III. Christ appears gloriously above all evil, in his work in the *hearts* of the elect, in their conversion and sanctification. This is what the application of redemption, so far as it is applied in this world, consists in, which is done by the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ. In this work of Christ in the hearts of his elect, he appears glorious above Satan. For the strong man armed is overcome, and all his armor, wherein he trusted, is taken from him, and his spoil divided. In this work, the lamb is, by the spiritual David taken out of the mouth of the lion and bear. The poor captive is delivered from his mighty and cruel enemies.

In this Christ appears gloriously above the *corruption* and wickedness of the heart, above its natural darkness in dispelling it, and letting in light, and above its enmity and opposition, by prevailing over it, drawing it powerfully and irresistibly to himself, and turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, above the obstinacy and perverseness of the will, by making them willing in the day of his power. In this he appears above all their lusts. For all sin is mortified in this work, and the soul is delivered from the power and dominion of it. — In this work the grace of Christ gloriously triumphs over men's *guilt*. He comes over the mountains of their sins, and visits them with his salvation.

And God is wont often in their work, either in the beginning or progress of it, to give his people those spiritual comforts, in which he gloriously appears to be above all affliction and sorrow. And often gives them to

triumph over the devil, and his powerful and cruel instruments. Many saints, by the influences of Christ's Spirit on their hearts, have rejoiced and triumphed, when suffering the greatest torments and cruelties of their persecutors. And in this work Christ sometimes gloriously appears above death, in carrying his people far above the fears of it, and making them to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

IV. Christ gloriously appears above all these aforementioned evils, in his *glorifying* the souls of departed saints in heaven. In this he gives a glorious victory over death. Death by it is turned from an enemy into a servant. And their death, by the glorious change that passes in the state of their souls, is become a resurrection, rather than a death. Now Christ exalts the soul to a state of glory, wherein it is perfectly delivered from Satan and all his temptations, and all his instrument, and from all remains of sin and corruption, and from all affliction. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat — and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," (Rev. 7:16, 17).

V. Christ appears gloriously above these evils, in what he does in his *providence* in the world, as head and redeemer of his church. He appears gloriously above Satan and all his instruments in upholding his church, even from its first establishment, through all the powerful attempts that have been made against it by earth and hell. Hereby fulfilling his promise, "That the gates of hell should never prevail against it," (Mat. 16:18).

Christ gloriously triumphed over these his enemies, in a remarkable success of his gospel, soon after his ascension, when many thousands in Jerusalem, and all parts of the world, were so soon turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and in causing his word to go on and prosper, and his church to increase and prevail against all the opposition of the heathen world, when they united all their power to put a stop to it, and root it out. So that, in spite of all that the philosophers, and wise men, and emperors and princes could do, the gospel in a little time overthrew Satan's old heathenish kingdom in the whole Roman empire, which was then the main part of the world. And so brought about the greatest and most glorious revolution. Instead of one single nation, now the greater part of the nations of the known world

were become God's people.

And Christ's exaltation above all evil in his government of the world, in his providence, as the Redeemer of his people, has since gloriously appeared in reviving his church by the reformation from popery, after it had for many ages lain in a great measure hid, and dwelt in a wilderness, under antichristian persecution.

And he will yet far more gloriously triumph over Satan and all his instruments, in all the mighty kingdoms that have been set up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, at the time of the fall of antichrist, and the beginning of those glorious times so much spoken of in Scripture prophecy. "Then shall the stone that has been cut out without hands smite all these kingdoms, and break them to pieces; and they shall become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind shall carry them away, that no place should be found for them: and the stone which smote them shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth," (Dan. 2:34, 35). "Then shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever," (Dan. 2:44). "And then the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever," (Rev. 11:15). Though great and might empires have been set up one after another in the world, in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, during the succession of so many ages; yet, Christ's kingdom shall be the last and the universal kingdom, which he has given him, as the heir of the world. Whatever great works Satan has wrought, the final issue and event of all, in the winding up of things in the last ages of the world, shall be the glorious kingdom of Christ through the world; a kingdom of righteousness and holiness, of love and peace, established everywhere. Agreeable to the ancient prediction, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the

kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him," (Dan. 7:13, 14, 27).

Then shall Christ appear gloriously exalted indeed above all evil. And then shall all the saints in earth and heaven gloriously triumph in him, and sing, "Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," (Rev. 19:1, 2, 6).

VI. Christ will appear gloriously above all evil in the *consummation* of the redemption of his elect church at the end of the world. Then will be completed the whole work of redemption with respect to all that Christ died for, both in its interpretation and application; and not till then. And then will Christ's exaltation above all evil be most perfectly and fully manifest. Then shall the conquest and triumph be completed with respect to all of them. Then shall all the devils, and all their instruments, be brought before Christ, to be judged and condemned. And then shall be completed their destruction in their consummate and everlasting misery; when they shall be all cast into the lake of fire, no more to range, and usurp dominion in the world, or have liberty to make opposition against God and Christ. They shall forever be shut up, thence forward only to suffer. Then shall death be totally destroyed. All the saints shall be delivered everlastingly from it. Even their bodies shall be taken from the power of death by a glorious resurrection.

Then shall all guilt, and all sin and corruption, and all affliction, all sighs and tears, be utterly and eternally abolished, concerning every one of the elect, they being all brought to one complete body, to their consummate and immutable glory. And all this as the fruit of Christ's blood, and as an accomplishment of his redemption.

Then all that evil, which has so prevailed, and so exalted itself, and usurped and raged, and reigned, shall be perfectly and forever thrust down and destroyed, with respect to all the elect. And all will be exalted to a state wherein they will be forever immensely above all these things.

“And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away,” (Rev. 21:4).

SECTION III

The subject improved and applied.

I. IN this we may see how the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ appears in the work of redemption. It was because the Father had from eternity a design of exceedingly glorifying his Son, that he appointed him to be the person that should thus triumph over the evil in the world. The work of redemption is the most glorious of all God’s works that are made known to us. The glory of God most remarkably shines forth in it. And this is one thing wherein its glory eminently appears, that therein Christ appears so gloriously above Satan and all his instruments, above all guilt, all corruption, all affliction, above death, and above all evil. And more especially, because evil has so exalted itself in the world, as we have heard, and exalted itself against Christ in particular.

Satan has ever had a peculiar enmity against the Son of God. Probably his first rebellion, which was his condemnation, was his proudly taking it in disdain, when God declared the decree in heaven, that his Son in man’s nature, should be the King of heaven, and that all the angels should worship him. However that was, yet it is certain that his strife has ever been especially against the Son of God. The enmity has always been between the seed of the woman, and the serpent. And therefore that war which the devil maintains against God is represented by the devil and his angels fighting against Michael and his angels (Rev. 12:7). This Michael is Christ (Dan. 10:21 and 12:1).

God had appointed his Son to be the heir of the world. But the devil has contested this matter with him, and has strove to set himself up as God of the world. And how exceedingly has the devil exalted himself against Christ! How did he oppose him as he dwelt among the Jews, in his tabernacle and temple! And how did he oppose him when on earth! And

how has he opposed him since his ascension! What great and mighty works has Satan brought to pass in the world! How many Babels has he built up to heaven, in his opposition to the Son of God! How exceeding proud and haughty has he appeared in his opposition! How have he and his instruments, and sin, affliction, and death, of which he is the father, raged against Christ? But yet Christ, in the work of redemption, appears infinitely above them all. In this work he triumphs over them, however they have dealt proudly, and they all appear under his feet. In this the glory of the Son of God, in the work of redemption, remarkably appears.

The beauty of good appears with the greatest advantage, when compared with its contrary, and appears vastly above it, in its greatest height. The glory of Christ, in this glorious exaltation over so great evil, that so exalted itself against him, the more remarkable appears, in that he is thus exalted out of so low a state. Though he appeared in the world as a little child; yet how does he triumph over the most gigantic enemies of God and men! He who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," is a man of war, and triumphed over his enemies in all their power. He who was meek and lowly of heart, has triumphed over those proud foes. And he is exalted over them all, in that which appears most despicable, even his cross.

II. Here is matter of exceeding great encouragement for all sinful miserable creatures in the world of mankind to come to Christ. For let them be as sinful as they will, and ever so miserable; Christ, in the work of redemption, is gloriously exalted above all their sin and misery.

How high soever their guilt has risen, though mountains have been heaping on mountains all the days of their lives, till the pile appears towering up to heaven, and above the very stars; yet Christ in the work of redemption appears gloriously exalted above all this height. — Though they are overwhelmed in a mighty deluge of woe and misery, a deluge that is not only above all their heads, but above the heads of the highest mountains, and they do not see how it is possible that they should escape; yet they have no reason to be discouraged from looking to Christ for help, who in the work of redemption, appears gloriously above the deluge of evil. Though they see dreadful corruption in their hearts, though their lusts appear like giants, or like the raging waves of the sea; yet they need

not despair of help, but may look to Christ, who appears in the work of redemption, gloriously above all this corruption.

If they apprehend themselves to be miserable captives of Satan, and find him too strong an adversary for them, and the devil is often tempting and buffeting them, and triumphing over them with great cruelty; if it seems to them that the devil has swallowed them up, and his got full possession of them, as the whale had of Jonah; yet there is encouragement for them to look again, as Jonah did, towards God's holy temple, and to trust in Christ for deliverance from Satan, who appears so gloriously exalted above him in the work of redemption.

If they are ready to sink with darkness and sorrows, distress of conscience, or those frowns of God upon them, so that God's waves and billows seem to pass over them; yet they have encouragement enough to look to Christ for deliverance. These waves and billows have before exalted themselves against Christ, and he appeared to be infinitely above them. — And if they are afraid of death, if it looks exceeding terrible, as an enemy that would swallow them up; yet let them look to Christ who has appeared so gloriously above death, and their fears will turn into joy and triumph.

III. What cause have they who have an interest in Christ, to glory in their Redeemer! They are often beset with many evils, and many mighty enemies surround them on every side, with open mouths ready to devour them. But they need not fear any of them. They may glory in Christ, the rock of their salvation, who appears so gloriously above them all. They may triumph over Satan, over this evil world, over guilt, and over death. For as their Redeemer is mighty, and is so exalted above all evil, so shall they also be exalted in him, They are now, in a sense, so exalted. For nothing can hurt them. Christ carries them, as on eagle's wings, high out of the reach of all evils, so that they cannot come near them, to do them any real harm. And, in a little time, they shall be carried so out of their reach, that they shall not be able even to molest them anymore forever.

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Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." -- **Hebrews 13:8**

Subject: Jesus Christ is the same now that he ever has been and ever will be.

The exhortation which the apostle gives the Christian Hebrews in the verse preceding this is to remember and follow the good instructions and examples of their ministers. “Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” The last part of this exhortation is to follow their faith. By following their faith, the apostle seems to intend adhering to the Christian faith and those wholesome doctrines which their pastors taught them and not depart from them, as many in that day had done, to heretical tenets. And the enforcement of the doctrine is in these words, “Considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Christ is the end of their conversation, he is the end of their conversation in their office, the end of the doctrines which they taught, and the end of all their administrations, and all their labors in all their work. And as he was so, they ought to follow their faith, or cleave steadfastly to the doctrines they had taught them, and not depart to other doctrines. For Jesus Christ was the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

If they still professed to be Christians or the followers of Jesus Christ, then they should still cleave to the same doctrines that they were taught in their first conversion. They should still follow the faith of them who had first indoctrinated them in Christianity. For Jesus Christ was the same now that he was then, and therefore, Christianity was obviously the same thing. It was not one thing now and another when they were first converted, or even like to any other thing than it always had been. Surely

therefore, when Christ and Christianity were thus unchangeable, he would therefore have them not fickle and changeable in their faith, not depart from their former faith, nor be carried about with divers and strange doctrines, as it follows in the next verse.

When it is said that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, by *yesterday* is meant *all time past;* by *today, the time present;* and by *forever, all that is future,* from the present time to eternity.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ is the same now that he ever has been and ever will be.

Christ is thus unchangeable in two respects.

I. In his divine nature. As Christ is one of the persons of the Trinity, he is God, and so has the divine nature, or the Godhead dwelling in him, and all the divine attributes belong to him, of which immutability or unchangeableness is one. Christ in his human nature was not absolutely unchangeable, though his human nature, by reason of its union with the divine, was not liable to those changes to which it was liable, as a mere creature. As for instance, it was indestructible and imperishable. Having the divine nature to uphold it, it was not liable to fall and commit sin, as Adam and the fallen angels did, but yet the human nature of Christ, when he was upon earth, was subject to many changes. It had a beginning. It was conceived in the womb of the Virgin. It was in a state of infancy, and afterwards changed from that state to a state of manhood, and this was attended not only with a change on his body, by his increasing in stature, but also on his mind. For we read that he not only increased in stature but also in wisdom. Luke 2:52. And the human nature of Christ was subject to sorrowful changes, though not to sinful ones. He suffered hunger, and thirst, and cold. And at last he suffered dreadful changes by having his body tortured and destroyed, and his soul poured out unto death. And afterwards became subject to a glorious change at his resurrection and ascension. And that his human nature was not liable to sinful changes, as Adam's or the angels', was not owing to anything in his human nature, but to its relation to the divine nature which upheld it. But

the divine nature of Christ is absolutely unchangeable, and not liable to the least alteration or variation in any respect. It is the same now as it was before the world was created. It was the same after Christ's incarnation as before, when Christ was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, and underwent many changes on earth, and at last suffered that dreadful agony in the garden, and suffered on the cross. It made no real alteration in the divine nature. And afterwards when Christ was glorified, and sat on the right hand of the Majesty of high, it made no alteration in his divine nature.

II. Christ is unchangeable in his office. He is unchangeable as the Mediator and Savior of his church and people. That unchangeableness of Christ in his office of Mediator, appears in several things.

First, this office never ceases to give place to any other to come in his room. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, that ever has been or ever shall be. He is an everlasting Savior. There have been typical mediators, many that have continued but a little while, and then have passed away, and others have come in their room. But the great antitype continues forever. There have been prophets, that have been raised up, and these have died, and others have succeeded them. Moses was not suffered to continue by reason of death. And the dispensation which he introduced was abolished to give place to another which Christ should introduce. Moses gives place to Christ, but Christ never gives place to any other. John the Baptist was a great prophet. He was Christ's forerunner; like the morning star, the forerunner of the sun, he shone bright a little while, but his ministry by degrees ceased, and gave way to the ministry of Christ, as the morning star by little and little goes out as the sun rises. John 3:30. John the Baptist says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." But Christ's ministry never ceases. So the ancient legal priests, they had but a changeable and short-lived priesthood. Aaron died, and his son Eleazar succeeded in his room. And so there were many priests, one after another. But Christ continues a priest forever. Heb. 7:23, 24. And they truly were many priests; and they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But Christ, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. These legal priests succeeded one another by inheritance. The father died and the son succeeded him, and then he died

and *his* son succeeded him. But it is observed that Christ, in his priesthood, "is without father and without mother, without descent." He had no ancestor that went before him in his priesthood, or any posterity that should succeed him in it. It that respect, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, of whom the Scriptures give us an account, that he was a priest, but seems not to have been a priest by inheritance, as the sons of Aaron were: as Heb. 7:3, "without father, and without mother, and without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually:" And therefore it is said of Christ, Psa. 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Those things that appertain to Christ's priesthood are everlasting. The tabernacle at which the priests of old officiated was a tabernacle that men pitched, and therefore a tabernacle that was taken down. It was the holy of holies of old. But Christ is a minister of the true tabernacle and the true sanctuary, which the Lord has built, and not man. Heb. 8:2. The holy of holies he entered into was *heaven*. He is priest in a tabernacle which shall never be taken down, and in a temple that shall never be demolished. So the altar on which he offers incense, the priestly garments or robes in which he officiates, are not of a corruptible nature. And so Christ is everlasting with reference to his kingly office. David and Solomon were great kings, and eminent types of Christ. But death put an end of their kingdom and greatness. Earthly monarchies that ever have been, those that have ruled over the bigger part of the known world, as particularly the Grecian and Roman monarchies, they have come to an end, but Christ's is an everlasting Kingdom, his throne is forever and ever. Heb. 1:8, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Though all other kingdoms shall be demolished, Christ's kingdom shall stand forever. Dan. 7:13, 14.

Second, Christ is at all times equally sufficient for the office he has undertaken. He undertook the office from eternity, and he was sufficient for it from eternity. He has been in the exercise of his office from the fall of man, and remains equally sufficient throughout all ages. His power and his wisdom, his love, his excellency, and worthiness is at all times equally sufficient for the salvation of sinners, and for the upholding and glorifying of believers. He is forever able to save, because he lives forever.

His life is an endless and unchangeable life. He is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb. 7:16. He is at all times equally accepted as a Mediator in the sight of the Father, who is ever well pleased in him. He is always equally worthy and lovely in his eyes. He is daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. The sacrifice that he has offered, and the righteousness that he has performed, is at all times equally sufficient. His blood is as sufficient to cleanse away sin now, as when it was warm from his wounds.

Third, he is now, and ever will be, the same that he ever has been in the disposition and will which he exercises in his office. He is not changeable in his disposition, as men are that are called to any office or business, which causes them to appear and act very differently in their offices at some times, from what they do at others. But Jesus Christ is, in this respect, the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is ever disposed to execute his office in a holy manner. He ever has been, still is, and ever will be disposed to execute it so as to glorify his Father, to discountenance sin, and to encourage holiness. He ever exercised the same grace and mercy in his office. He undertook the office of a Mediator from eternity with delight. He then delighted in the thoughts of saving sinners, and he still delights in it. He never has altered from the disposition to accomplish it. When man actually fell and became a rebel and an enemy, an enemy to his Father and himself; still it was his delight to do the part of a Mediator for him. And when he came into the world, and came to his last agony, when the bitter cup that he was to drink was set before him, and he had an extraordinary view of it, so that the sight of it made "his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood;" still he retained his disposition to do the part of a Mediator for sinners, and delighted in the thoughts of it. So, even when he was enduring the cross, the salvation of sinners was a joy set before him, Heb. 12:2. And he never alters from his readiness to receive and embrace all that do in faith come to him. He is always equally willing to receive such. His love is unchangeable. He loved from eternity. Jer. 31:3. He loved with an everlasting love; and it will be to eternity. John 13:1, "Having loved his own he loved them unto the end."

Fourth, Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, as the end which

he aims at in his office. His supreme end in it is the glory of God, as particularly in vindicating the honor of his majesty, justice, and holiness, and the honor of his holy law. For this end did he undertake to stand as a Mediator between God and man, and to suffer for men, *viz.* that the honor of God's justice, majesty, and law may be vindicated in his sufferings. And he also undertook the office to glorify the free grace of God. And his special end in his undertaking was the salvation and happiness of the elect. These two ends he has in his eye in all parts of the work of his office. And these two ends he unchangeably aims at. These he sought on entering into covenant with the Father from eternity. These he has sought from the beginning of the world to this time, and these he ever will seek. He does not sometimes pursue one end, and then alter his mind and pursue another. But he ever pursues the same ends.

Fifth, Christ ever acts by the same rules in the execution of his mediatorial office.

The rules that Christ acts by, in the execution of his office, are contained in a twofold covenant.

1. The covenant of redemption, or the eternal covenant that was between the Father and the Son, wherein Christ undertook to stand as Mediator with fallen man, and was appointed thereto of the Father. In that covenant, all things concerning Christ's execution of his mediatorial office were agreed between Christ and his Father, and established by them. And this covenant or eternal agreement is the highest rule that Christ acts by in his office. And it is a rule that he never in the least departs from. He never does anything, more or less, than is contained in that eternal covenant. Christ does the work that God gave him to do in that covenant, and no other. He saves those, and those only, that the Father gave him in that covenant to save. And he brings them to such a degree of happiness as was therein agreed. To this rule, Christ is unchangeable in his regard. It stands good with Christ in every article of it, yesterday, today, and forever.

2. Another covenant that Christ has regard to in the execution of his mediatorial office is that covenant of grace which God established with man. Though indeed this be less properly the rule by which Christ acts as

Mediator than the covenant of redemption, yet it may be called a rule. God does, as it were, make his promises which he makes to his creatures, his rule to act by: *i.e.* all his actions are in an exact conformity to his promises, and he never departs in the least degree from them, as is the case with men with regard to what they make the rule of their actions. Yet it is not a rule to God in the same sense as a rule is to a created agent, which must be considered as something antecedent to the purposes of the agent, and that by which his purposes are regulated. But God's promises are consequent on his purposes, and are no other than the expressions of them. And the covenant of grace is not essentially different from the covenant of redemption. It is but an expression of it. It is only that covenant of redemption partly revealed to mankind for their encouragement, faith, and comfort. And therefore the fact that Christ never departs from the covenant of redemption, infers that he will never depart from the covenant of grace. For all that was promised to men in the covenant of grace was agreed on between the Father and the Son in the covenant of redemption. However, there is one thing wherein Christ's unchangeableness in his office appears: that he never departs from the promises that he has made to man. There is the same covenant of grace in all ages of the world. The covenant is not essentially different now from what it was under the Old Testament, and even before the flood. And it always will remain the same. It is therefore called an everlasting covenant, Isa. 55:3.

And as Christ does not alter his covenant, so he unchangeably fulfills it. He never departs in the least jot or tittle. Though he has given exceedingly great and precious promises to those that believe in him, he ever fulfills them all. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of his promises shall fail, till all be fulfilled. It is especially on account of his unchangeableness with respect to his promises, that he styles himself, "*I am that I am,*" and is called "Jehovah," Exo. 3:14, and 6:3. Christ revealed himself to the children of Israel, in their Egyptian bondage, by this name, to encourage the people that he would fulfill his promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Sixth, He is in many respects unchangeable in the acts which he exercises in his office. He is unchangeable in his acceptance of those that believe in

him, and never will reject them. And he is unchangeable in his complacency and delight in them. He is unchangeable in his intercession for his church and people. He ever lives to make intercession. Heb. 7:25. His intercession before God in heaven is a continual intercession. It is a constant presentation of his will before the Father for the salvation and happiness of those that are his in the virtue of his blood. And as Christ is unchangeable in his intercession, so he is unchangeable in upholding and preserving those that are his, and ordering all things for their good, until they are brought to his heavenly glory. He is constant and unchangeable in taking care of them in all respects, and will hereafter receive them to a constant and unchangeable enjoyment of himself.

APPLICATION

I. We learn from the truth taught in the text, how fit Christ was to be appointed as the surety of fallen man. Adam, the first surety of mankind, failed in his work, because he was a mere creature, and so a mutable being. Though he had so great a trust committed to him, as the care of the eternal welfare of all his posterity, yet, not being unchangeable, he failed, and transgressed God's holy covenant. He was led aside, and drawn away by the subtle temptation of the devil. He being a changeable being, his subtle adversary found means to turn him aside, and so he fell, and all his posterity fell with him. It appeared, therefore, that we stood in need of a surety that was unchangeable, and could not fail in his work. Christ, whom God appointed to this work, to be to us a second Adam, is such an one that is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and therefore was not liable to fail in his undertaking. He was sufficient to be depended on as one that would certainly stand all trials, and go through all difficulties, until he had finished the work that he had undertaken, and actually wrought out eternal redemption for us.

II. This truth may be well applied to the awakening of those who profess to be Christians, and this on several accounts. You may be hence assured that Christ will fulfill his threatenings that he has denounced against unbelievers. There are many awful threatenings which Christ has denounced against wicked men. Christ has threatened woe to this wicked world, Mat. 18:7, and has declared concerning all, that do not believe, that they shall be damned. This is that which Christ gave in charge to his

disciples before his ascension, when he sent them forth to preach and teach all nations. Mark 16:15, 16, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” So Christ declares that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire. Mat. 7:18. And he has especially threatened an awful punishment to gospel sinners. He has declared that every branch in him that beareth not fruit shall be cut off, and cast forth, and gathered up and burnt. And that, however wicked men and false Christians may dwell among the godly, as tares grow among wheat, yet when the harvest comes, and the wheat is gathered into the barn, the tares shall be gathered into bundles and burnt. Mat. 13:30. And in the explication of the parable, he says that, at the day of judgment, “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,” verse 41, 42. So he declares in Mat. 7:22-23, concerning those visible Christians that say to him, “Lord, Lord,” and that do not do the will of his Father which is in heaven, that he will hereafter profess unto them, that he never knew them, and that he will say unto them, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity;” and that those that build their house on the sand shall fall, and that great shall be their fall; and that such as these shall see many coming from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. And he teaches in his parables that unprofitable servants, and those that as professing Christians come to the gospel feast without the wedding garment, shall be bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He often denounces woe on hypocrites, and threatens concerning such as begin a life of religion and do not finish, and are not thorough and persevering in it, that they shall come to shame. That those who are foolish virgins, that take their lamps and take no oil with them, shall at last be shut from the marriage when others enter in with the bridegroom, and that when they come to the door, they shall find it shut, and shall cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” in vain. And that at the day of judgment, Christ shall separate the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, setting the righteous on the right hand, and the wicked on the left.

And that he shall say to the wicked, “Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. And particularly he has threatened concerning them that have not a spirit of self-denial, that do not cut off a right hand or a right foot, nor pluck out a right eye, that they shall go with two hands, or two feet, or two eyes, into hell-fire, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And that those that have not a spirit to sell all for his sake, and that do not in comparison of him hate father, and mother, and wife, and every earthly relative and earthly possession, shall not be acknowledged of him as his disciples. And concerning those that are ashamed of religion before men, that of them will he be ashamed before his Father and before the angels. And concerning those that are of a revengeful spirit, and not of a spirit of forgiveness, that they shall not be forgiven: and concerning all that are of a malicious spirit, and not of a spirit of Christian love and meekness, that are of an angry, wrathful, and scornful disposition, that say to their brother, “Raca,” or “Thou fool;” that they shall be in danger of everlasting punishment proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes. And concerning worldly-minded men, he has declared that ‘tis impossible for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. Concerning such he has said, “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation; and woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger.” And concerning such as are addicted to carnal mirth and jollity, he says, “Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.” And he has abundantly declared concerning gospel sinners, that their punishment shall be far more dreadful than that of the worst of the heathen. That it shall be more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them. And he has declared that those, that are once cast into hell, shall in no wise come out thence, until they have paid the uttermost farthing.

Such things as these did Christ threaten against the ungodly when he was here upon earth. And by the doctrine of the text you learn that he now is and ever will be the same that he was then. He has not at all altered, no, nor ever will. But these dreadful things that he has threatened, he will surely fulfill. Christ was no more disposed to threaten than to fulfill his threatenings. Christ is as holy, and his nature and will is as ever to sin

now as ever it was. And he is as strictly just now as he was then.

Therefore, let no Christless person flatter himself, that, continuing such, he shall by any means escape punishment. Christ's threatenings are the threatenings of one, that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And what he has threatened with his mouth he will fulfill with his hands. When Christ appears at the day of judgment, and you shall stand at his bar to be judged, you will find him in judging, just what he was, and just what you find him in your Bibles, in threatening.

III. The truth in the text may be applied by way of reproof.

First, to those that have been heretofore under awakenings, but have now become senseless and careless. This doctrine shows your folly. You act as if Christ were altered, as though he were not now so dreadful a Judge, and his displeasure not so much to be feared, as heretofore. Time was when you were afraid of the displeasure and wrath of Christ. You were afraid of the dreadful sentence from his mouth, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." And why is it so much otherwise with you now? Is not the wrath of this Judge as much to be dreaded now, as ever it was? Time was, when those threatenings, that Christ has denounced against sinners, were terrible things to you. And why do you make so light of them now? Is this your great Judge grown weaker than he was, and less able to fulfill his threatenings? Are you less in his hands than you were, or do you imagine that Christ is become more reconciled to sin, and has not such a disposition to execute vengeance for it as he had?

Time was, that you seemed to feel yourself to be in lamentable circumstances that you had not an interest in Christ, and to have a great mind to get an interest in him. You sought it, and prayed to God daily for it, and took considerable pains, and went and asked others what you should do to obtain an interest in Christ. Why is it that you are so much more careless about it now? Is Christ altered? Is an interest in him less valuable, or less necessary, now, than it was then? Was acceptance with him worth earnestly seeking, and praying, and striving for then, and is it good for nothing now? Did you stand in great need of it then, and can you do well enough without it now?

Time was when you seemed to be much concerned about your having been guilty of so much sin against God and Christ, and, it may be, wept about it in your prayers. But now, you are not concerned about it. The thought of your having so often and so greatly offended him does not so much trouble you, but that you can be easy and quiet, and have your heart taken up about one vanity or another, without being very much disturbed with the thoughts of your sins. Then you used to be careful to avoid sin. You were watchful to avoid those things that were forbidden in God's holy word. You were careful that you did not sin by profaning the Sabbath, or by unsuitably spending the time in God's house, or by neglecting the duties of reading and prayer. You were careful of your behavior among men, lest you should transgress. If you suspected anything to be sinful then, you dared not do it. But now there is no such care upon your spirit, there is no such watch maintained, you have no such guard upon you. But when you are tempted to do or omit anything, it is not a thought coming with weight upon your heart, "Is this sinful or not?" "Is this contrary to the mind and will of God, or not?" You do not dwell long on such kind of thoughts as these. You are grown very bold, and live in neglects and practices that are sinful, and that you have light enough to know to be so. Just as if you thought that Christ's disposition with respect to sin was altered, and that he was less an enemy to sin now than he was then. Instead of being less an enemy to sin than you then thought he was, and instead of being a less dreadful Judge of ungodly men than you then imagined, or had a sense of in your heart, he is a thousand times more so. For then, when you was most awakened and convinced, you conceived but very little of what is in reality. You apprehended very imperfectly the enmity of Christ's nature against sin, and the dreadfulness of his wrath against the ungodly. It was but a little sense you had of it. His wrath is infinitely more dreadful than ever you have yet had any conception of.

And though Christ be unchangeable, yet you are not. You are changed for the worse since the time when you were awakened. Christ is equally an enemy of sin, and you are become more sinful than you then were. Christ's wrath is in itself equally dreadful as it then was. But you have far more reason to dread it than you had then, for you are in much greater danger of it. And, if you do not repent, [you] are much nearer to the

execution of it. And not only so, but you are now exposed to much more of that wrath. Christ's wrath hung over your head then, and so it does now, but with this difference, that now much more of that wrath hangs over you than did then. You hung over the pit of hell then, and so you do now. But with this difference, that you have ever since been kindling and enraging the flames of that fiery gulf over which you hang, so that they are vastly fiercer than they were then. And the moth of time has been nibbling at that slender thread ever since, and has much nearer gnawed it off than it had then. And your heart is far more hardened than it was. And the devil has faster hold of you, and the way to escape is more blocked up. And your case upon many accounts is inexpressibly more doleful, however much more careless and unconcerned you are about your own circumstances.

Second, this doctrine reproves all that have entered into the bonds of the Christian covenant, and have proved false to it. If Christ be the same yesterday, today, and forever, and is always the same towards us in fulfilling as he is in promising, then surely we ought to be so towards him. If he never breaks covenant with his people, then they are greatly to be reproved who are false and treacherous in their dealings with him. Therefore this reproves a covenant people that depart from Christ, and break covenant with him, as we in this land have done, having greatly revolted and degenerated both from the pure profession and religious practice of the first times of the country. Though Christ and his doctrine, and the religion that he taught, are always the same, yet this country has great multitudes in it that are driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and has now for a long time been exceedingly corrupted by the prevalency of many evil customs and practices.

And by this doctrine is every particular person reproved that does not take care to keep covenant with Christ. We are in general under the solemn bonds of our baptismal covenant. And that covenant that was sealed in our baptism, most of us have explicitly owned, and expressly and solemnly promised to walk in, in a way of obedience to all the commands of God, as long as we live. And have, time after time, in the most solemn manner, sealed this covenant anew, by taking the body and blood of Christ upon it at the Lord's supper. They bring dreadful guilt on

themselves who are not careful to fulfill such vows. They that have solemnly vowed to obey Christ in all his commandments as long as they live, and have sealed these vows by eating and drinking at the Lord's upper with far greater solemnity than if they sealed it with as many solemn oaths, yet live in ways of sin, live in the neglect of several commanded duties, and in the commission of forbidden sin, or at least do not make it the care of their lives strictly to keep Christ's commands, surely such persons render themselves very guilty.

Third, this doctrine reproves those that have been seemingly pious and have fallen away to ways of sin. Who these persons are, their own consciences are better able to judge than those that are about them. There are many here present, that in times past have been seemingly pious and let everyone inquire at the mouth of his own conscience whether his seeming piety holds on, whether it be not come to an end. If you find reason, by a serious and strict examination, to conclude that you are one of them, consider how vile is your treatment of him who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and who never is false to any to whom he once manifests his favor. How greatly does God complain of such short-lived religion in the Scriptures! Hos. 6:4, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Psa. 78:56-57, "They tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies, but turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow."

Fourth, hereby the truly godly are greatly to be reproved for their declension. There are many such here, as I charitably hope, and many of them I fear have been guilty of great declension in religion. Formerly they were lively and animated in religion, now they are dull and indifferent. Formerly their hearts went up on high after God, but now after the world. They carried themselves for a while very exemplary, but have since behaved in such a manner as to wound religion. Why will you be guilty of such a departure from your Redeemer, who changes not with regard to you? His love he formerly manifested towards you, but it does not change. It has ever held up to the same height. His faithfulness never has failed to you. Why then does your love so languish towards him, and why

are you so unfaithful to him? He keeps up the same care and watchfulness towards you, to preserve you, to provide for you, to defend you from your enemies, and why will you suffer your care and strictness to serve and please Christ, and honor him, to fail in any measure?

When you were first converted, your heart seemed to be wrapt up in love to Christ, and delight in him and his praises. You were then continually meditating on Christ and the things of Christ, and your meditations on him were sweet. And you were then much in speaking of those things, and you delighted to speak of them. And why is it so much otherwise with you now? Is Christ less excellent than he was then? Is he less worthy of your love?

Fifth, this doctrine affords matter of reproof to us of this town, for our declining is much from what we have lately been. That we have exceedingly declined in religion is most manifest and what all confess. A little while ago Christ was the great object of regard among us. The hearts of the people in general were greatly engaged about Christ, as though Christ had been all, and the world nothing. There was then a great deal of conversation among all sorts of persons, and in all companies, of Christ. They who thought they had no interest in Christ were full of concern how to obtain an interest in him. And they were almost ready to neglect their worldly concerns, as though Christ was all they needed. And with regard to those that thought they had obtained an interest in Christ, their thoughts and their conversation seemed also to be very much taken up about Christ. They were much engaged in talking of the excellency of Christ, and seemed to be full of the grace and dying love of Christ. And one and another of you expressed the strong sense you had of one perfection and excellency and another of Christ, and of the glory of the works that he has done, and of the sweetness of the words that he speaks. The town seemed to be full of the praises of Christ. You expressed to one another how you earnestly longed to praise him and bless his name forever and ever, and how you desired that others should help you to praise him. The benefits procured by Christ were then greatly valued in the town, and both Christ and his benefits were then precious among us. And multitudes seemed to be concerned what they should do for the honor of Christ, how they should live to his glory, and do something for

the advancement of his kingdom in the world. But now, how much otherwise is it. How little is Christ set by, in comparison of what he has been. How much is he neglected, how much is he dropped out of people's common discourse and conversation! How have many of you left off earnestly following after Christ, to pursue after the world. One to pursue after riches, another to be engrossed by amusement and diversion, another by fine clothes and gay apparel. And all sorts, young and old, have gone their way wandering in a great measure from Christ: as though Christ was not as excellent now as he was then, as though his grace and dying love were not as wonderful now as they were then, as though Christ were not now as much preferable to the world, as worthy to be loved, and to be praised, to be thought of, and talked of; and as though he was not as worthy that we should be concerned to honor him, and live to his praise, as ever he was. If Christ be as much altered as the town is altered, he is altered very much indeed. Are we so foolish as to think that he, that is the same yesterday, today, and forever, is so much altered from what he was three years ago?

IV. The truth taught in the text may be applied by way of encouragement.

First, to sinners whose minds are burdened and exercised with concern about the state of their souls, to come to Christ, and put their trust in him for salvation. If Christ is now and ever will be the same that he ever was, then here is great encouragement for you to come to him, as will appear by considering two things:

1.How Christ has invited you to come to him with promises that he will accept of you if you do so. Christ in his word often invites those that are in your circumstances, whether we consider your circumstances as a lost sinner, or as a sinner under anxiety and concern about your condition. If we consider your circumstances merely as a lost sinner, Christ invites you. For he is often inviting and calling on sinners to come to him. Pro. 8:4, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And chap. 9:4, 5, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; and ye that want understanding, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled." Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. 22:17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Or if we consider your circumstances as a sinner burdened in your soul with concern about your

condition, such are especially invited by Christ. Mat. 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And Isa. 55:1, “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” And John 7:37, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” That Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, shows what a joint encouragement these invitations are for you to come to Christ in two ways:

(1.) It shows that as Christ invited such sinners, when these invitations were spoken and penned, so he does now, for he is the same now that he was then. So that you are to look on the invitations that you find in your Bible, not only as invitations that were made then when they were first spoken or written, but that are made now. Christ makes them now as much as he made them then. Those invitations which proceeded out of Christ’s mouth when he was on earth are made to you now as much as if they now this moment proceeded from Christ’s mouth. For there is no alteration in Christ. He is the same as ever he has been. So that when you read or hear any of the invitations of Christ, you may look upon them as if they now came from his blessed lips.

(2.) It shows that if you come to Christ, he will surely prove to be the same in accepting that he is in inviting. Christ will be consistent with himself. He will not appear one way in calling and inviting you, and then another way in his treatment of you when you come to accept of his invitation. Christ will not appear with two faces, with a pleasant winning face in inviting, and with a frowning countenance in his treatment of persons that come at his call. For he is ever the same. You see that Christ is exceedingly gracious and sweet in his invitations. And he surely will be as gracious and sweet in his acceptance of you, if you close with his call. And then Christ does not merely *invite,* he also *promises,* that if you accept of his invitation, he will not reject you. John 6:37, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” He that is the same yesterday, today, and forever, will be found the same in fulfilling that he is in promising.

2. How Christ has treated those that have come to him heretofore. Christ in times past has graciously received those that have come to him. He has made them welcome. He has embraced them in the arms of his love. He

has admitted them to a blessed and eternal union with himself and has given them a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. And he is the same still that he has been heretofore. We have an account in Scripture of many that came to him. We have an account in the history of Christ's life of many that accepted his calls, and we have an account in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, of multitudes that believed in him. But we read of none that ever were rejected by him. And we ourselves have seen many that we have reason to think Christ has accepted on their coming to him, many that have been great sinners, many that have been old hardened sinners, many that had been backsliders, and many that had been guilty of quenching the Spirit of God. And he is the same still. He is as ready to receive such sinners now as he was then. Christ never yet rejected any that came to him. He has always been the same in this respect. He is so now, and so he surely will be still.

Second, there is in this doctrine great encouragement to all persons to look to Christ under all manner of difficulties and afflictions, and that especially from what appeared in Christ when he was here. We have an account in the history of Christ of great numbers under a great variety of afflictions and difficulties, resorting to him for help. And we have no account of his rejecting one person who came to him in a friendly manner for help, under any difficulty whatever. But on the contrary, the history of his life is principally filled up with miracles that he wrought for the relief of such. When they came to him, he presently relieved them, and always did it freely without money or price. We never read of his doing anything for any person as hired to it, by any reward that was offered him. And he helped persons fully, he completely delivered them from those difficulties under which they labored. And by the doctrine of the text we learn that though he is not now upon earth, but in heaven, yet he is the same that he was then. He is as able to help, and he is as ready to help under every kind of difficulty. Here is great encouragement for persons who are sick to look to Christ for healing, and for their near friends to carry their case to Christ; for how ready was Christ, when on earth, to help those that looked to him under such difficulties! And how sufficient did he appear to be for it, commonly healing by laying on his hand, or by speaking a word! And we read of his healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. Persons under the most terrible and inveterate

diseases were often healed. And Christ is the same still. And here is great encouragement for mourners to look to Christ for comfort. We read of Christ's pitying such, as in the case of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:12, 13 etc. "And so he wept with those that wept, and groaned in spirit, and wept with compassion for Martha and Mary, when he saw their sorrow for the loss of their brother Lazarus, John 11:32, etc. And he is the same still. He is as ready to pity those that are in affliction now as he was then.

And here is great encouragement for those that are exercised with the temptations of Satan. For how often do we read of Christ casting out Satan from those of whom he had the strongest possession! And Christ is the same still. And whoever are under spiritual darkness, from the consideration of their own sinfulness, have encouragement hence to look to Christ for comfort. For if they do so, he will be ready to say to them, as he did to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." For he is still the same that he was then.

V. The truth taught in the text may be applied by way of consolation to the godly. You may consider that you have in him an unchangeable Savior, who, as he has loved you and undertaken for you from eternity, and in time has died for you before you were born, and has since converted you by his grace, and brought you out of a blind, guilty, and undone condition, savingly home to himself; so he will carry on his work in your heart; he will perfect what is yet lacking in you, in order to your complete deliverance from sin, and death, and all evil, and to your establishment in complete and unalterable blessedness. From the unchangeableness of your Savior, you may see how he thinks of that chain in Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow them he also did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." The Savior has promised you very great and precious blessings in this world. And things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, in the world to come. And from his unchangeableness you may be assured that the things which he has promised he will also perform.

You may from this doctrine see the unchangeableness of his love. And therefore, when you consider how great love he seemed to manifest, when

he yielded himself up to God a sacrifice for you, in his agony and bloody sweat in the garden, and when he went out to the place of his crucifixion bearing his own cross, you may rejoice that his love now is the same that it was then.

And so when you think of past discoveries which Christ has made of himself in his glory, and in his love to your soul, you may comfort yourself that he is as glorious, and his love to you is as great, as it was in the time of these discoveries.

You may greatly comfort yourself that you have an unchangeable friend in Christ Jesus. Constancy is justly looked upon as a most necessary and most desirable qualification in a friend. That he be not fickle, and so that his friendship cannot be depended on as that of a steady sure friend. How excellent his friendship is, you may learn from his manner of treating his disciples on earth, whom he graciously treated as a tender father his children, meekly instructing them, most friendly conversing with them, and being ready to pity them, and help them, and forgive their infirmities. And then you may consider this doctrine, and how it thence appears that he is the same still that he was then, and ever will be the same.

From the unchangeableness of your Savior, you may be assured of your continuance in a state of grace. As to yourself, you are so changeable, that, if left to yourself, you would soon fall utterly away. There is no dependence on your unchangeableness. But Christ is the same, and therefore, when he has begun a good work in you he will finish it. As he has been the author, he will be the finisher of your faith. Your love to Christ is in itself changeable. But his to you is unchangeable, and therefore he will never suffer your love to him utterly to fail. The apostle gives this reason why the saints' love to Christ cannot fail, *viz.* that his love to them never can fail.

From the unchangeableness of Christ you may learn the unchangeableness of his intercession, how he will never cease to intercede for you. And from this you may learn the unalterableness of your heavenly happiness. When once you have entered on the happiness of heaven, it never shall be taken from you, because Christ, your Savior and friend, who bestows it on you, and in whom you have it, is

unchangeable. He will be the same forever and ever, and therefore so will be your happiness in heaven. As Christ is an unchangeable Savior, so he is your unchangeable portion. That may be your rejoicing, that however your earthly enjoyments may be removed, Christ can never fail. Your dear friends may be taken away and you suffer many losses. And at last you must part with all those things. Yet you have a portion, a precious treasure, more worth, ten thousand times, than all these things. That portion cannot fail you, for you have it in him, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

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Christ the Example of Ministers

"For I have given you an example, that he should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you,
The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." **-- John 13:15, 16**

We have in the context an account of one of the many very remarkable things that passed that night wherein Christ was betrayed (which was on many accounts the most remarkable night that ever was), *viz.* Christ's washing his disciples' feet; which action, as it was exceeding wonderful in itself, so it manifestly was symbolical, and represented something else far more important and more wonderful, even that greatest and most wonderful of all things that ever came to pass, which was accomplished the next day in his last sufferings. There were three symbolical representations given of that great event this evening; one in the passover, which Christ now partook of with his disciples; another in this remarkable action of his washing his disciples' feet. Washing the feet of guests was the office of servants, and one of their meanest offices. And therefore was fitly chosen by our Savior to represent that great abasement which he was to be the subject of in the form of a servant, in becoming obedient unto death, even that ignominious and accursed death of the cross, that he might cleanse the souls of his disciples from their guilt and spiritual pollution.

This spiritual washing and cleansing of believers was the end for which Christ so abased himself for them. Tit. 2:14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." Eph. 5:25, 26, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water." That Christ's washing his disciples' feet signified this spiritual washing of the soul, is manifest by his own words in the 8th verse of the context, "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him. If I wash thee now, thou has no part with me." Christ, in being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, not only did the part of a servant unto God, but in some respects also of a servant unto us.

And this is not the only place where his so abasing himself for our sakes is compared to the doing of the part of a servant to guests. We have the like representation made in Luke 22:27, “For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.” And wherein Christ was among the disciples as he that did serve, is explained in Mat. 20:28. Namely, in *his giving his life a ransom for them.*

When Christ had finished washing his disciples’ feet, he solemnly requires their attention to what he had done, and commands them to follow his example therein. Verses 12-17, “So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet: for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

When our Savior calls on his disciples to imitate the example he had given them in what he had done, we are to understand him, not merely by the example he gave in the emblematical action, in washing his disciples’ feet, in itself considered, but more especially, of that much greater act of his that was signified by it, in abasing himself so low, and suffering so much, for the spiritual cleansing and salvation of his people.

This is what is chiefly insisted on as the great example Christ has given us to follow. So it is once and again afterward, in the discourse Christ had with his disciples, this same night, verse 34 of the chapter wherein is the text, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John 15:12, 13, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” And so in 1 John 3:16, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Christ, in the words of the text, does not only intend to recommend this example of his to the disciples as Christians, or some of his professing people, but especially as his ministers. This is evident by those words he uses to enforce this counsel. “Neither he that is sent, is greater than he that sent him.” In which words he manifestly has respect to that great errand on which he had sent them, when he bid them *go and preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;* Mat. 10:5, 6. And on which they were to be sent after his resurrection, when he said to them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The same errand that Christ has respect to John 20:21, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

And what confirms this is, that Christ elsewhere recommends to officers in his church, that are in that respect chief among his followers, the example which he set in his abasing himself to be as a servant that minister, to guests at a table, in his giving for us; Mat. 20:27, 28, “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Compare Luke 22:25-28.

The work and business of ministers of the gospel is as it were that of servants, to wash and cleanse the souls of men. For this is done by the preaching of the word, which is their main business. Eph. 5:26, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

The words of the text thus considered, do undoubtedly lead us to this conclusion, and teach us this doctrine, *viz.*

That it is the duty of ministers of the gospel, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master.

And this is what I would by divine assistance make the subject of my present discourse.

And I propose to handle this subject in the following method:

I. I would observe wherein ministers of the gospel ought to follow the example of Christ.

II. Give some reasons why they should follow his example.

III. I would endeavor to make a proper application of those things to myself, and others that are called to this work of the ministry.

IV. Show what improvement should be made of them by the people of this church and congregation.

I. Then, I would show wherein ministers of the gospel ought, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

And here,

First, in general, ministers should follow their Lord and Master in all those excellent virtues, and in that universal and eminent holiness of life, which he set an example of in this human nature.

The ministers of Christ should be persons of the same spirit that their Lord was of: the same spirit of humility and lowliness of heart; for the servant is not greater than his Lord. They should be of the same spirit of heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the glory, wealth, and pleasures of this world. They should be of the same spirit of devotion and fervent love to God. They should follow the example of his prayerfulness; of whom we read from time to time of his retiring from the world, away from the noise and applause of the multitudes, into mountains and solitary places, for secret prayer, and holy converse with his Father; and once of his rising up in the morning a great while before day, and going and departing into a solitary place to pray, Mark 1:35. And another time, of his going out into a mountain to pray, and continuing all night in prayer to God, Luke 6:12. Ministers should follow Christ's example, in his strict, constant, and inflexible observance of the commands which God has given him, touching what he should do and what he should say; he spake nothing of himself, but those things which the Father had commanded him, those he spake, and always did those things that pleased him, and continued in thorough obedience in the greatest trials,

and through the greatest opposition that ever there was any instance of. Ministers should be persons of the same quiet, lamb-like spirit that Christ was of, the same spirit of submission to God's will, and patience under afflictions, and meekness towards men; of the same calmness and composure of spirit under reproaches and sufferings from the malignity of evil men; of the same spirit of forgiveness of injuries; of the same spirit of charity, of fervent love and extensive benevolence; the same disposition to pity the miserable, to weep with those that weep, to help men under their calamities of both soul and body, to hear and grant the requests of the needy, and relieve afflicted; the same spirit of condescension to the poor and mean, tenderness and gentleness toward the weak, and great and effectual love to enemies. They should also be of the same spirit of zeal, diligence, and self-denial for the glory of God, and advancement for his kingdom, and for the good of mankind; for which things' sake Christ went though the greatest labors, and endured the most extreme sufferings.

Second, more particularly should ministers of the gospel follow the example of their great Master, in the manner in which they seek the salvation and happiness of the souls of men. They should follow his example of love to souls. Though it be impossible that they should love them to so great a degree, yet they should have the same spirit of love to them, and concern for their salvation, according to their capacity. Love to men's souls in Christ was far above any regard he had to his temporal interest, his ease, his honor, his meat and drink. And so it should be with his ministers. They should have the same spirit of compassion to men under their spiritual calamities and miseries that he had, of whom we read, Mark 6:34, "That when he came out and saw much people, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." The word translated *moved with compassion,* signifies, that he was most sensibly affected, and his inmost bowels moved with pity. And again we read, Luke 19, that when Christ was riding to Jerusalem, that wicked city, but a few days before his crucifixion, and was come to the descent of the mount of Olives, where he had a fair view of the city, when he beheld it, he wept over it, on account of the misery and ruin they brought themselves into danger of by their sin. Although the sin by which especially they had

made themselves thus miserable, was their vile treatment of him (for Jerusalem was a city that had been peculiarly injurious to him). And though Christ knew how cruelly he should be treated in that city before that week was past, how he there should be set at nought, and with great malignity bound, falsely accused and condemned, reviled, spit upon, scourged, and crucified; yet all does not prevent his most affectionate tears of compassion towards them. “When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst know, even thou (thou, as wicked as thou art, and as vile as thou hast been in thy treatment of me; even thou), the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.” (Compare Mat. 23:37, and Luke 13:34). One would have thought he would have been more concerned for himself than Jerusalem, who had such a dreadful cup to drink, and was to suffer such extreme things by the cruelty of Jerusalem that week. But he, as it were, forgets his own sorrow and death, and weeps over the misery of his cruel enemies.

Ministers should imitate their great Master in his fervent prayers for the good of the souls of men. We find it to be Christ’s manner, whenever he undertook anything of special importance in the work of his ministry, first to retire and pour out his soul in extraordinary prayer to this Father. Thus when he was about to enter on a journey, and go a circuit throughout all Galilee, to preach in their synagogues, “he rose up a great while before day, and went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Mark 1:35-39. And when he was about to choose his twelve apostles, and send them out to preach the gospel, he first *went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* Luke 6:12, etc. And the night before his crucifixion, wherein he offered up himself a sacrifice for the souls of men, he pours out his soul in extraordinary prayer for those he was about to die for, as we have an account in John 17. That wonderful and most affecting prayer of his, was not so much for himself as for his people. Although he knew what amazing sufferings he was to undergo the next day, yet he seems as it were to be unmindful of himself, and to have his heart all taken up with concern about his disciples; which he manifests in his spending so much time in comforting and counseling them, and praying for them with great affection, compassion, earnest care, and fatherly tenderness. And the prayers that

he made in the garden of Gethsemane, under the amazing view of the cup he was to drink the next day, seem to be intercessory; especially the last of the three prayers which he there made, *when being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground:* when he did not pray that the cup might pass from him, as he had done before, but that *God's will might be done*. (Compare Luke 22:44. With Mat. 26:42). That prayer, as the apostle teaches us, Heb. 5:6, 7, was a prayer that he put up as our High Priest; and therefore must be a prayer of intercession for us, a prayer offered up with his blood which he sweat in his agony; as prayers were wont to be offered up with the blood of the sacrifices in the temple. His prayer at that time, *Thy will be done,* was not only an expression of submission, but had the form of a petition, as it is in the Lord's prayer. He prayed that God's will might be done in *his* being enabled *to do the will of God*, persevering in obedience unto death; and in the success of his sufferings; which might in an eminent manner be called the will of God, as it is in Psa. 40:7, 8, "Then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Ministers should follow the example of Christ in his diligence and laboriousness in his work. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Acts 10:38. So abundant was he in labors, that oftentimes he scarcely allowed himself time to eat or drink; insomuch that his friends sometimes went out to lay hold of him, saying, "He is beside himself." Mark 3:20, 21. That three years and a half of his public ministry was so filled with action and labor, that one of his disciples that constantly attended him, and was an eyewitness of his activity, tells us that if *all that he did should be written, the world would not contain the books.*

Ministers should follow the example of Christ, in his readiness not only to labor, but suffer, for the salvation of souls, to spend and be spent for them. In this respect the apostle Paul imitated his Lord and Master. Phil. 2:17, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Col. 1:24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." 2 Cor. 12:15, "And I will

very gladly spend and be spent for you." Christ, in his prayers, labors, and sufferings for the souls of men, is represented as travailing in birth with them. Isa. 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul." In like manner should ministers travail for the conversion and salvation of their hearers. They should imitate the faithfulness of Christ in his ministry, in speaking whatsoever God had commanded him, and declaring the whole counsel of God. They should imitate him the manner of his preaching; who taught not as the scribes, but with authority, boldly, zealously, and fervently; insisting chiefly on the most important things in religion, being much in warning men of the danger of damnation, setting forth the greatness of the future misery of the ungodly; insisting not only on the outward, but also the inward and spiritual, duties of religion. Being much in declaring the great provocation and danger of spiritual pride, and a self-righteous disposition; yet much insisting on the necessity and importance of inherent holiness, and the practice of piety. Behaving himself with admirable wisdom in all that he said and did in his ministry, amidst the many difficulties, enemies, and temptations he was surrounded with, wonderfully adapting his discourses to persons, seasons, and occasions. Isa. 50:4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

Ministers should follow their Master in his zeal, so wonderfully mixed and tempered with gentleness and condescension in his dealing with souls, preaching the gospel to the poor, and taking a gracious notice from time to time of little children. And they should imitate their Lord in his following the work of ministry, not from mercenary views, or for the sake of worldly advantages, but for God's glory, and men's salvation. And in having his heart engaged in his work; it being his great delight, and his meat, to do the will of his Father, and finish his work, John 4:34, and having his heart set on the success of his great undertaking in the salvation of souls; this being the joy that was set before him, for which he run his race, endured the cross, and despised the shame. His delight in the prospect of the eternal salvation of souls more than countervailing the dread he had of his extreme sufferings. Many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it, for his love was stronger than death; yea, than the mighty pains and torments of such a death.

I now proceed to the

II. Thing proposed in the handling of this subject, which was to give some reasons why ministers of the gospel should follow the example of their great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

First, they should follow his example, because he is their Lord and Master. Christ, as he is a divine person, is the Lord of heaven and earth, and so one of infinite dignity, to whom our supreme respect is due. And on that account he is infinitely worthy that we should regard, not only his precepts but example. The infinite honorableness of his person recommends his virtues, and a conformity to them as our greatest dignity and honor.

Christ is more especially the Lord of Christians; who are therefore under special obligations to follow him. He is their shepherd; and surely the flock should follow their shepherd. He is the captain of their salvation; and it becomes soldiers to follow their captain and leader. He is their head, not only their head of rule and authority, but their head of influence and communication, their vital head. And Christians are members of his body; but members, as partakers of the life and spirit of the head, are conformed to the head.

But Christ is still in a more peculiar manner the Lord and Master of ministers of the gospel, as they are not only members of his church, but the officers of his kingdom, and the dignified servants of his family. It is the manner of a people to imitate their prince, but especially the ministers of his kingdom, and officers of his household. It is the duty of the whole army to follow their general, but especially of those officers that have a commission under him.

Second, ministers of the gospel are in some respects called and devoted to the same work and business that Christ himself was appointed to. Ministers are not men's mediators; for there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They are not our priests to make atonement and work out righteousness for us. For Christ by one offering

has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. They are not lords over God's heritage; for one is their Master, even Christ. But yet ministers of the gospel, as Christ's servants and officers under him, are appointed to promote the designs of that great work of Christ, the work of salvation. It is the work that ministers are devoted to; and therefore they are represented as coworkers with Christ. 2 Cor. 6:1, "We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Christ is the Savior of the souls of men. Ministers, also, are spoken of in Scripture as saving men's souls. 1 Tim. 4:16, "In doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Rom. 11:14, " If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." 1 Cor. 9:22, "That I might by all means save some. And whereas it is said, Oba. 21, "Saviors shall come upon mount Zion;" ministers of the gospel are supposed to be there intended.

The work of ministers is in many respects like the work that Christ himself was appointed to, as the Savior of men; and especially the same with the work which Christ does in his prophetical office; only with this difference, that ministers are to speak and act wholly under Christ, as taught of him, as holding forth his word, and by light and strength communicated from him. Christ himself, after his baptism, followed the work of the ministry. He was a minister of the true sanctuary (Heb. 8:2), he spake and acted as his Father's minister; was a minister of the gospel, and as such preached and administered sacraments.

Pastors of churches are ministers of the same gospel. But in their ministry, they act as the ministers of Christ. Jesus Christ is the great Bishop of souls. Ministers are also bishops under him. Christ came into the world *that he might be the light of the world*. Ministers are set to be lights unto the churches, and are also set to be *the light of the world,* Mat. 5:14. Christ is the *bright and morning star*. Ministers are *stars in the Christ's hand*. Christ is *the messenger of the covenant*. Ministers are called *messengers of the Lord of hosts*. Christ is his people's *shepherd, the good shepherd, the great shepherd of his sheep*. Ministers are also frequently called shepherds and are directed to feed the flock of Christ, which he purchased with his own blood.

Seeing therefore it is thus, that the work that ministers are called and

devoted to, is no other than the work of Christ, or the work that Christ does, certainly they ought to do his work; which they do not do unless they imitate him, and do as he does, or as he hath set them an example.

Third, the example of Christ is most worthy of ministers' imitation. His example was perfect, without error, blemish, or defect; and therefore worthy to be made our rule, and to be regarded and followed without exception, limitation, or reserve; unless in those things which he did that were proper to his peculiar office. Christ's virtue was not only perfect, but was exercised in those circumstances, and under those trials, that rendered his virtuous acts vastly the most amiable of any that ever appeared in any creature whether man or angel. If we consider the perfection of the virtue that Christ exercised, his virtue did exceed that of the most eminent saints, more than the purest gold exceeds the meanest and foulest ore. And if we consider the manner of its exercise, and the trials under which it was exercised, and the blessed fruits it has brought forth, so his virtue exceeds that of all other perfectly innocent creatures, and even of the brightest angel, as the sun in its glory exceeds the stars.

And this example was set us in our own nature, and so is especially fitted for our imitation. There was in the man Christ Jesus, who was one of us, and dwelt among us, such exercises of virtue as became our state and circumstances in the world, as those who dwell in frail flesh and blood, and as members of human society, and dwellers in such a world of sorrow and death.

And then these amiable exercises of virtue in Christ were exhibited chiefly in the things which he did in that work wherein ministers are called to act as coworkers with him. The bright and glorious example of Christ that is set before us is chiefly in what he did during the three years and a half of his public ministry; and in the devotion, heavenly-mindedness, humility patience, meekness, forgiveness, self-denial, and charity, which he exercised in the labors and sufferings he went through for the good of the souls of men. And therefore is especially set for the imitation of those who are set apart that they may make it the whole business of their lives to seek the same good of souls.

Fourth, ministers should follow that example of Christ which has been

spoken of, because if they are fit for ministers, and are such as have any right to take that work upon themselves, Christ has set them this example in what he has done for their souls. “I have given you an example (says Christ in the text) that you should do as I have done to you.” Ministers should be animated in this work by a great love to the souls of men, and should be ready to spend and be spent for them; for Christ loved them, and gave himself for them. He loved them with a love stronger than death. They should have compassion to men under their spiritual miseries, as Christ had pity on them. They should be much in prayer for the people of their flock, considering how Christ prayed and agonized for them, in tears of blood. They should travail in birth with the souls that are committed to their care, seeing their own salvation is the fruit of the travail of Christ’s soul. They should exercise a meek and condescending spirit to the mean and weak and poor, and should as it were wash the feet of Christ’s disciples; considering how Christ condescended to them, when they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and abased himself to wash their feet.

The chief trials of Christ’s virtue, and so their most bright and eminent exercises, were in the abasement, labor, and suffering that he was the subject of for our salvation. Which certainly may well endear those virtues to us, and greatly engage us to imitate that example. So the things whereof this example consists, were things by which we have infinite benefit, without which we should have been unspeakably miserable for ever and ever, and by virtue of which we have the glorious privilege of the children of God, and have a full title to the crown of exceeding glory, and pleasures for evermore, at God’s right hand.

III. I now proceed, as was proposed, in the third place, to apply what has been said to myself, and others that are employed in this sacred work of the gospel ministry, and to such as are about to undertake it, or are candidates for it; and particularly to him that is now to be solemnly set apart to this work in this place.

We are those to whom these things especially belong. We may hear Christ saying to us this day, “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I

have done." For the words of Christ in the text were not only spoken to the twelve, but are also spoken unto us. We have now had represented to us, though in a very imperfect manner, the example that Christ has set, and what reasons there are that we, above all others, should imitate it.

It is not only our great duty, but will be our greatest honor, to imitate Christ, and do the work that he has done, and so act as coworkers with him.

There are two kinds of persons that are given to Christ, and appointed and devoted of God to be his servants, to be employed with Christ, and under him, in his great work of the salvation of the souls of men; and they are angels and ministers. The angels are all of them, even the most exalted of them, subjected of God the Father to our Redeemer, and given to him as his servants, to be subservient to the great designs of his saving and glorifying his elect. Heb. 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And doubtless they were created for this very end; God made them for his Son, to be subservient to him in this great work; which seems to be the chief design of all God's works. And the employment of ministers of the gospel in this respect, is like that of the glorious angels. The principalities and powers in heavenly places, esteem it not any debasement, but their great honor, to be employed as Christ's ministers in this work. For therein they are employed as the ministers of God, in the greatest and most honorable of all God's works; that work of God wherein his glory is chiefly displayed, and which his heart was chiefly upon from eternity. It is the honor of the Son of God himself, that he is appointed to this work. It was because God the Father infinitely loved his Son, and delighted to put honor upon him, that he appointed him to be the author of that glorious work of the salvation of men. And when we consider the greatness, importance, and excellency of it, we have reason to be astonished at the condescension of God, that he would ever improve mere creatures as coworkers and ministers of Christ in this affair; *for who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. 2:6, "Which is fit, or worthy? Who is equal to a work of such dignity, and vast importance?" Especially have we reason to wonder that God will employ, not only holy and glorious angels, but feeble, frail, sinful worms of the dust in this work, who need redemption themselves. And yet the

honor that is put upon faithful ministers is, in some respects, greater than that of the angels. They seem to be that kind of servants that are the most dignified of the two. For Christ makes his angels to be ministering spirits unto them, unto the faithful ministers. And the angels are their angels: as faithful ministers of the gospel are not only ministers to the church, but dignified members of the church, that spouse of the King of glory, on whom the most glorious angels, the highest ministers in the court of heaven, are appointed to attend. And then Christ seems especially to delight to carry on his work of the salvation of souls, through the ministrations of men, who have that nature that Christ is united to, and that are of those sons of men with whom he had his delight before the world was made. So it is by the ministration of men, that the Scriptures are given. They were the penmen of the Holy Bible; and by them the gospel is preached to the world. By them ordinances are administered, and, through their ministrations, especially, souls are converted. When Christ himself was employed in the work of the ministry, in the time of his humiliation, but few, comparatively, were brought home to him, immediately by his ministrations. It pleased Christ to reserve this honor for his disciples and ministers, after his ascension, to whom he promised that they should, in this respect, do greater works than he, John 14:12. And accordingly it was by their preaching that the Gentile world was converted, and Satan's kingdom overthrown. Thus God delights "to perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and suckling, that he may still the enemy and the avenger."

It will be our great honor that we are called to this work of Christ, if therein we follow him. For therein we shall be like the Son of God. But if we are unfaithful in this office, and do not imitate our Master, our offense will be heinous in proportion to the dignity of our office, and our final and everlasting disgrace and ignominy proportionably great. And we, who in honor are exalted up to heaven, shall be cast down proportionably low in hell.

Let us further consider, that our following the example of Christ in the work of the ministry, is the way to enjoy the sensible joyful presence of Christ with us. The disciples had the comfort of Christ's presence and conversation by following him, and going where he went. When we cease

to follow him, he will go fro us, and we shall soon lose sight of him.

Our being conformed to Christ's example, will also be the way for us to be conformed to him, and partake with him in his privileges. It is the way for us to have his joy fulfilled in us. Christ, in doing the work to which the Father appointed him, obtained a glorious victory over his enemies, and having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphed over them. If we imitate his example, it will be the way for us in like manner to conquer the principalities and powers, yea, to be much more than conquerors. It will be the way for us always to triumph in Jesus Christ. It will be the way for us to obtain success in our ministry, and actually to be made the happy instruments of the eternal salvation of souls. Christ has not only *told* us, but *shown* us, the way to success in our business, and the way to victory over all that oppose us in it. And our imitating Christ in our ministry, will be the way for us to be partakers with him in his glory; the way for us in like manner to be approved, and openly honored and rewarded by God; the way to be brought to sit with Christ on his throne, as he is set down with the Father on his throne. And as Christ is now exalted to shine as the bright luminary and glory of heaven, so our following his example will be the way for us to be exalted, to *shine* with him, "as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. 12:3. And as Christ in heaven rejoices in his success, and will receive his church, presented to him without spot, as his everlasting crown; so our imitating Christ in our work, will be the way to partake with Christ in this joy, and have the souls whose salvation we are the instruments of, to be our crown of rejoicing for ever. Thus Christ and we shall rejoice together in that world of glory and joy where there is no more labor or sorrow. And we must enter into that joy and glory, in the way of following Christ in our work. There is no other way for ministers to enter there.

And that we may thus follow Christ's example, and be partakers with him in his glory, we had need to be much in prayer for his Spirit. Christ himself, though the eternal Son of God, obtained the Holy Spirit for himself in a way of prayer. Luke 3:21, 22, "Jesus being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him." If we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we shall have Christ himself thereby living in us, and then we shall undoubtedly

live like him. If that fountain of light dwells richly in us, we shall shine like him, and so shall be burning and shining lights.

That we may *be* and *behave* like Christ, we should earnestly seek much acquaintance with him, and much love to him, and be much in secret converse with him. It is natural, and as it were necessary, for us to imitate those whom we are much acquainted and conversant with, and have a strong affection for.

And in order to our imitating Christ in the work of the ministry, in any tolerable degree, we had need not to have our hearts overcharged, and time filled up with worldly affections, cares, and pursuits. The duties of a minister that have been recommended, are absolutely inconsistent with a mind much taken up with worldly profit, glory, amusements, and entertainments.

And another thing that is of very great importance, in order to our doing the work that Christ did, is that we take heed that the religion we promote, be that same religion that Christ taught and promoted, and not any of its counterfeits and delusive appearances, or anything substituted by the subtle devices of Satan, or vain imaginations of men, in lieu of it. If we are zealous and very diligent to promote religion, but do not take good care to distinguish true from false religion, we shall be in danger of doing much more hurt than good with all our zeal and activity.

I come now to the

IV. And last thing at first proposed, *viz.* to show what improvement should be made of what has been said, by the people of this church and congregation, who are now about solemnly to commit their souls to the charge of him whom they have chosen to be their pastor, and who is now about to be set apart to that office.

And YOU, MY BRETHREN, as all of you have immortal souls to save, if you have considered the things that have been spoken, cannot but be sensible, that it not only greatly concerns your elect pastor to take heed

how he behaves himself in his great work, wherein he is to act as a coworker with Christ for your salvation; but that it infinitely concerns you how you receive him, and behave towards him. Seeing that it is for *your* eternal salvation that he is appointed to watch and labor; and seeing his business is to do the work of Christ for you, it is natural and easy to infer, that your reception and entertainment of him should in some respect imitate the church's reception of Jesus Christ. Gal. 4:14, "My temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Christ, in the text, commands those whom he sends to follow his example, and then in the 20th verse following, he directs those to whom he sends them, how to treat them. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Seeing the work of your minister is in some respects the same with the work of Christ, and he is to be appointed and devoted to do this work for your souls in particular, surely you should esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake and do all that is in your power to help him, and put him under the best advantages to imitate his great Master *in* this work, to give himself wholly *to* his work, as Christ did during the time of his ministry, and to be successful *in* his work. And as it was observed before, that it is impossible that ministers should in any tolerable degree imitate the example of Christ in their work, if their minds are overcharged with worldly cares and concerns, you ought so to provide for him and support him, that he shall have no need to entangle himself with these things; otherwise you will not only bring a great temptation upon him, which will vastly tend to hinder him in the work of Christ among you, but will, for the sake of sparing a little of your worldly substance to yourselves, foolishly and miserably starve your own souls and the souls of your children, and will but cheat yourselves. For you will not be in the way to prosper either in your spiritual or temporal concerns. The way to have your houses filled with plenty, is to "honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first-fruits of all your increase." Pro. 3:9.

And as it is your duty and interest well to support your minister, so it concerns you to pray earnestly for him, and each one to do what in him lies in all respects to encourage and help him, and strengthen his hands, by attending diligently to his ministry, receiving the truth in love, treating

him with the honor due to a messenger of Christ, carefully avoiding all contention with him, and one with another. And take heed in particular, that you do not forsake him to follow those, who under pretense of extraordinary purity, are doubtless doing the devil's work, in separating themselves, and endeavoring to draw off others from the ministers and churches in the land in general.

If you think I have spoken something freely to you, I hope it will be considered, that this is probably the last time you will ever hear me speak from the pulpit, and that I shall never see you again, till we see one another in the invisible and eternal world, where these things will open to us all in their just importance.

And now nothing is left but to express my sincerest wishes and prayers, that the God of all grace would be with you and your elect pastor, and that he would give you in him a great and long-lasting blessing, that you may enjoy much of the presence of Christ with you in him. That in him may be made up the great loss you sustained by the death of your former faithful and eminent pastor, whose praise was in all the churches. And that you may receive him as you ought to receive a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, and may be a great comfort to him, and may receive great spiritual and eternal benefit by his means And that you may be each other's crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

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The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable

"Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord save spoken it, and will do it." **[Ezekiel 22:14]**

In the former part of this chapter, we have a dreadful catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem; as you may see from the first to the thirteenth verse. In the thirteenth, which is the verse preceeding the text, God manifests his great displeasure and fearful wrath against them for those their iniquities. "Behold, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee." The expression of God's smiting his hand, signifies the greatness of his anger, and his preparing himself, as it were to execute wrath answerable to their heinous crimes. It is an allusion to what we sometimes see in men when they are surprised, by seeing or hearing of some horrid offence, or most intolerable injury, which very much stirs their spirits, and animates them with high resentment; on such an occasion they will rise up in wrath and smite their hands together, as an expression of the heat of their indignation, and full resolution to be avenged on those who have committed the injury; as in chap. xxi. 7. " I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it,"

Then, in the text, the punishment of that people is represented.

1. The nature of their punishment is more generally represented in that therein God will undertake to deal with them: God here threatens to deal with the sinners in Jerusalem. The prophets could do nothing with them. God had sent them one after another; but those sinners were too strong for them, and beat one, and killed another. Therefore now God himself undertakes to deal with them.

2. Their punishment is more particularly represented in three things, viz. The intolerableness, the remedilessness, and the unavoidableness of it.

(1.) The intolerableness of it: Can thine heart endure?
(2.) The remedilessness, or the impossibility of their doing any thing for their own relief: Can thine hands be strong?
(3.) The unavoidableness of it: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.

DOCTRINE

Since God hath undertaken to deal with impenitent sinners, they shall neither shun the threatened misery, nor deliver themselves out of it, nor can they bear it.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

1. Show what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with inpenitent sinners.
2. That therefore they cannot avoid punishment.
3. That they cannot in any measure deliver themselves from it, or do any thing for their own relief under it.
4. That they cannot bear it.
5. I shall answer an inquiry; and then proceed to the use.

I. I shall show what is implied in God's undertaking to deal with impenitent sinners...

Others are not able to deal with them. They baffle all the means used with them by those that are appointed to teach and to rule over them. They will not yield to parents, or to the counsels, warning, or reproofs of ministers. They prove obstinate and stiff-hearted. Therefore God undertakes to deal with them This implies the following things:

1. That God will reckon with them, and take of them satisfaction to his justice. In this world God puts forth his authority to command them; and to require subjection to him. In his commands he is very positive, strictly requiring of them the performance of such and such duties, and as positively forbidding such and such things which were contrary to their duty. But they have no regard to these commands. God continues commanding, and they continue rebelling. They make nothing of God's authority. God threatens, but they despise his threatening They make nothing of dishonoring God; they care not how much their behavior is to the dishonor of God. He offers them mercy, if they will repent and return; but they despise his mercy as well as his wrath. God calleth, but they refuse. Thus they are continually plunging themselves deeper and deeper in debt, and at the same time imagine they shall escape the payment of the debt, and design entirely to rob God of his due.

But God hath undertaken to right himself. He will reckon with them; he hath undertaken to see that the debts due to him are paid. All their sins are written in his book; not one of them is forgotten, and every one must be paid. If God be wise enough, and strong enough, he will have full satisfaction: he will exact the very uttermost farthing. He undertakes it as his part, as what belongs to him, to see himself righted, wherein he hath been wronged Deut. xxii. 35. "To me belongeth vengeance." Ibid. vii. 10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face."

2. He hath undertaken to vindicate the honor of his Majesty. His Majesty they despise. They hear that he is a great God; but they despise his greatness; they look upon him worthy of contempt, and treat him accordingly. They hear of him by the name of a great King; but his authority they regard not, and sometimes trample upon it for years together. But God hath not left the honor of his Majesty wholly to their care. Though they now trample it in the dust, yet that is no sign that it will finally be lost. If God had left it wholly in their hands, it would indeed be lost. But God doth not leave his honor and his glory with his enemies; it is too precious in his eyes to be so neglected. He hath reserved the care of it to himself: He will see to it that his own injured Majesty is vindicated. If the honor of God, upon which sinners trample, finally lie in the dust, then it will be because he is not strong enough to vindicate himself. He hath sworn that great oath in Numbers xiv. 2 1. "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Sinners despise his Son, and trample him under their feet. But he will see, if he cannot make the glory of his Son appear, with respect to them; that all the earth may know how evil a thing it is to despise the Son of God. God intends that all men and angels, all heaven and all earth, shall see whether he be sufficient to magnify himself upon sinners who now despise him. He intends that the issue of things with respect to them shall be open, that all men may see it.

3. He hath undertaken to subdue impenitent sinners. Their hearts while in this world are very unsubdued. They lift up their heads and conduct themselves very proudly and contemptuously, and often sin with an high hand. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongues walk

through the earth. They practically say as Pharaoh did, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice." Job xxi. 4 1. "They say to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Some, who cover their sin with specious show, who put on a face of religion, and a demure countenance and behavior, yet have this spirit secretly reigning in their breasts. Notwithstanding all their fair show, and good external carriage, they despise God in their hearts, and have the weapons of war about them, though they are secret enemies, and carry their swords under their skirts. They have most proud, stubborn, and rebellious hearts, which are ready to rise in opposition, to contend with him, and to find fault with his dispensations. Their hearts are full of pride, enmity, stubbornness, and blasphemy, which work in them many ways, while they sit under the preaching of the word, and while the spirit of God is striving with them; and they always continue to oppose and resist God as long as they live in the world; they never lay down the weapons of their rebellion."

But God hath undertaken to deal with them and to subdue them; and those proud and stubborn hearts, which will not yield to the power of God's word, shall be broken by the power of his hand. If they will not be willing subjects to the golden sceptre, and will not yield to the attractives of his love, they shall be subject to the force of the iron rod, whether they will or no.

Them that proudly set up their own righteousness, and their own wills against God, God hath undertaken to bring down; and without doubt, it will be done. He hath undertaken to make those who are now regardless of God, regard him. They shall know that he is Jehovah. Now they will not own that he is the Lord; but they shall know it, Isa. xxvi. 11. "Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see: But they shall see."

Now wicked men not only hate God, but they slight him; they are not afraid of him. But, he will subdue their contempt. When he shall come to take them in hand, they will hate him still; but they will not slight him; they will not make light of his power as they now do; they will see and feel too much of the infinity of his power to slight it They are now wont to slight his wrath; but then they will slight it no more, they will be infinitely

far from it, they will find by sufficient experience that his wrath is not to be slighted: They will learn this to their cost, and they never will forget it.

4. God hath undertaken to rectify their judgments. Now they will not be convinced of those things which God tells them in his word. Ministers take much pains to convince them, but all is in vain. Therefore God will undertake to convince them, and he will do it effectually. Now they will not be convinced of the truth of divine things. They have indeed convincing arguments set before them; they hear and see enough to convince them; yet so prone are they to unbelief and Atheism, that divine things never seem to them to be real. But God will hereafter make them seem real.

Now they are always doubting of the truth of the Scriptures, questioning whether they be the word of God, and whether the threatenings of Scripture be true. but God hath undertaken to convince them that those threatenings are true, and he will make them to know that they are true, so that they will never doubt any more for ever. They will be convinced by dear experience....Now they are always questioning whether there be any such place as hell. They hear much about it, but it always seems to them like a dream. But God will make it seem otherwise than a dream....Now they are often told of the vanity of the world; but we may as well preach to the beasts, to persuade them of the vanity of earthly things. But God will undertake to convince them of this; he will hereafter give them a thorough conviction of it, so that they shall have a strong sense of the vanity of all these things.

Now ministers often tell sinners of the great importance of an interest in Christ, and that that is the one thing needful. They are also told the folly of delaying the care of their souls, and how much it concerns them to improve their opportunity. But the instructions of ministers do not convince them, therefore God will undertake to convince them.

Impenitent sinners, while in this world, hear how dreadful hell is. But they will not believe that it is so dreadful as ministers represent. They cannot think that they shall to all eternity suffer such exquisite and horrible torments. But they shall be taught and convinced to purpose, that the representations ministers give of those torments, agreeable to the

word of God, are no bugbears; and that the wrath of God is indeed as dreadful as they declare. Since God hath undertaken to deal with sinners, and to rectify their judgments in these matters, and he will do it thoroughly; for his work is perfect; when he undertakes to do things, he doth not do them by halves; therefore before he shall have done with sinners, be will convince them effectually, so that they shall never be in danger of relapsing into their former errors any more. He will convince them of their folly and stupidity in entertaining such notions as they now entertain.

Thus God hath undertaken to deal with obstinate unbelievers. They carry things on in great confusion; but we need not be dismayed at it: Let us wait, and we shall see that God will rectify things. Sinners will not always continue to rebel and despise with impunity. The honor of God will in due time be vindicated; and they shall be subdued and convicted, and shall give an account. There is no sin, not so much as an idle word that they shall speak, but they must give an account of it; Matth. xii 36. And their sins must be fully balanced, and recompensed, and satisfaction obtained. Because judgment against their evil works is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Yet God is a righteous judge; he will see that judgment is executed in due time.

I come now,

II. To show, that therefore impenitent sinners shall not avoid their due punishment.... God hath undertaken to inflict it; he hath engaged to do it; he takes it as his work, as what properly belongs to him, and we may expect it of him. If he hath sworn by his life, that he will do it; and if he hath power sufficient; if he is the living God, doubtless we shall see it done. And that God hath declared that he will punish impenitent sinners, is manifest from, many scriptures; as Deut. xxxii.41. "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Deut. vii. 10. "He will not be slack to him that hateth him: He will repay him to his face." Exod. xxxiv. 7. "That will by no means clear the guilty." Nahum i. 3. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."
God saith in the text, "I the Lord hath spoken it, and will do it;" which leaves no room to doubt of the actual fulfilment of the threatening in its

utmost extent....Some wicked men have flattered themselves, that although God hath threatened very dreadful things to wicked men for their sins, yet in his heart he never intends to fulfil his threatenings, but only to terrify them, and make them afraid, while they live. But would the infinitely holy God, who is not a man that he should lie, and who speaketh no vain words, utter himself in this manner: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it; I have not only threatened, but I will also fufill my threatenings; when at the same time these words did not agree with his heart, but he secretly knew that though he had spoken, yet he intended not to do it? Who is he that dares to entertain such horrid blasphemy in his heart?

No; let no impenitent sinner flatter himself so vainly and foolishly. If it were indeed only a man, a being of like impotency and mutability with themselves, who had undertaken to deal with them; they might perhaps with some reason flatter themselves; that they should find some means to avoid the threatened punishment. But since an omniscient, omnipotent, immutable God hath undertaken, vain are all such hopes.

There is no hope that possibly they may steal away to heaven, though they die unconverted. There is no hope that they can deceive God by any false show of repentance and faith, and so be taken to heaven through mistake; for the eyes of God are as a flame of fire; they perfectly see through every man; the inmost closet of the heart is all open to him

There is no hope of escaping the threatened punishment by sinking into nothing at death, like brute creatures Indeed, many wicked men upon their deathbeds wish for this. If it were so, death would be nothing to them in comparison with what it now is. But all such wishes are vain.

There is no hope of their escaping without notice, when they leave the body. There is no hope that God, by reason of the multiplicity of affairs which ho hath to mind, will happen to overlook them, and not take notice of them, when they come to die; and so that their souls will slip away privately, and hide themselves in some secret corner, and so escape divine vengeance.

There is no hope that they shall be missed in a crowd at the day of

judgment, and that they can have opportunity to hide themselves in some cave or den of the mountains, or in any secret hole of the earth; and that while so doing, they will not be minded, by reason of the many things which will be the objects of attention on that day....Neither is there any hope that they will be able to crowd themselves in among the multitude of the saints at the right hand of the Judge, and so go to heaven undiscovered....Nor is there any hope that God will alter his mind, or that he will repent of what he hath said; for he is not the son of man that lie should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? When did God ever undertake to do any thing and fail?

I come now,

III. To show, that as impenitent sinners cannot shun the threatened punishment; so neither can they do any thing to deliver themselves from it, or to relieve themselves under it.

This is implied in those words of the text, Can thine hand. be strong? It is with our hands that we make and accomplish things for ourselves. But the wicked in hell will have no strength of hand to accomplish any thing at all for themselves, or to bring to pass any deliverance, or any degree of relief.

1. They will not he able in that conflict to overcome their enemy, and so to deliver themselves. God, who will then undertake to deal with them, and will gird himself with might to execute wrath, will be their enemy, and will act the part of an enemy with a witness; and they will have no strength to oppose him. Those who live negligent of their souls under the light of the gospel, act as if they supposed, that they should be able here after to make their part good with God. 1 Cor. x. 22. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he ?"...But they will have no power, no might to resist that omnipotence, which will be engaged against them.

2. They will have no strength in their hands to do any thing to appease God, or in the least to abate the fierceness of his wrath. They will not be able to offer any satisfaction: they will not be able to procure God's pity.

Though they cry, God will not hear them. They will find no price to offer to God, in order to purchase any favor, or to pay any part of their debt.

3. They will not be able to find any to befriend them, and intercede with God for them. They had the offer of a mediator often made them in this world; but they will have no offers of such a nature in hell. None will befriend them. They will have no friend in HELL; all there will be their enemies. They will have no friend in heaven: 'None of the saints or angels will befriend them; or if they should, it would be to no purpose. There will be no creature that will have any power to dellver them, nor will any ever pity them.

4. Nor will they ever be able to make their escape. They will find no means to break prison and flee. In hell, they will be reserved in chains of darkness for ever and ever. Malefactors have often found means to break prison, and escape the hand of, civil justice. But none ever escaped out of the prison of hell, which is God's prison. It is a strong prison: it is beyond any finite power, or the united strength of all wicked men and devils, to unlock, or break open the door of that prison. Christ hath the key of hell; "he shuts and no man opens."

5. Nor will they ever be able to find any thing to relieve them in hell. They will never find any resting place there; any place of respite; any secret corner, which will be cooler than the rest, where they may have a little respite, a small abatement of the extremity of their torment. They never will be able to find any cooling stream or fountain, in any part of that world of torment; no, nor so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues. They will find no company to give them any comfort, or to do them the least good. They will find no place, where they can remain, and rest, and take breath for one minute: For they will be tormented with fire and brimstone; and will have no rest day nor night for ever and ever.

Thus impenitent sinners will be able neither to shun the punishment threatened, nor to deliver themselves from it, nor to find any relief under it.

I come now,

IV. To show, that neither will they be able to bear it. Neither will their bands be strong to deliver themselves from it, nor will their hearts be able to endure it.

It is common with men, when they meet with calamities in this world, in the first place to endeavor to shun them. But if they find, that they cannot shun them, then after they are come, they endeavor to deliver themselves from them as soon as they can; or at least, to order things so, as to deliver themselves in some degree. But if they find that they can by no means deliver themselves, and see that the case is so that they must bear them; then they set themselves to bear them: they fortify their spirits, and take up a resolution, that they will support themselves under them as well as they can.

But it will be utterly in vain for impenitent sinners to think to do thus with respect to the torments of hell. They will not be able to endure them, or at all to support themselves under them: the torment will be immensely beyond their strength. What will it signify for a worm, which is about to be pressed under the weight of some great rock, to be let fall with its whole weight upon it, to collect its strength, to set itself to bear up the weight of the rock, and to preserve itself from being crushed by it? Much more in vain will it be for a poor damned soul, to endeavor to support itself under the weight of the wrath of Almighty God. What is the strength of man, who is but a worm, to support himself against the power of Jehovah, and against the fierceness of his wrath? What is man's strength, when set to bear up against the exertions of infinite power? Matt. xxi. 44, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When sinners hear of hell torments, they sometimes think with themselves: Well, if it shall come to that, that I must go to hell, I will bear it as well as I can: as if by clothing themselves with resolution and firmness of mind, they would be able to support themselves in some measure; when, alas! they will have no resolution, no courage at all. However they shall have prepared themselves, and collected their strength; yet as soon as they shall begin to feel that wrath, their hearts will melt and be as water. However before they may seem to harden their hearts, in order to prepare themselves to bear, yet the first moment they

feel it, their hearts will become like wax before the furnace. Their courage and resolution will be all gone in an instant; it will vanish away like a shadow in the twinkling of an eye. The stoutest and most sturdy will have no more courage than the feeblest infant: let a man be an infant, or a giant, it will be all one. They will not be able to keep alive any courage, any strength, any comfort, any hope at all.

I come now as was proposed,

V. To answer an inquiry which may naturally be raised concerning these things.

Inquiry. Some may be ready to say, If this be the case, if impenitent sinners can neither shun future punishment, nor deliver themselves from it, nor bear it; then what will become of them?

Answer. They will wholly sink down into eternal death. There will be that sinking of heart, of which we now cannot conceive. We see how it is with the body when in extreme pain. The nature of the body will support itself for a considerable time under very great pain, so as to keep from wholly sinking. There will be great struggles, lamentable groans and panting, and it may be convulsions. These are the strugglings of nature to support itself under the extremity of the pain. There is, as it were, a great lothness in nature to yield to it; it cannot bear wholly to sink.

But yet sometimes pain of body is so very extreme and exquisite, that the nature of the body cannot support itself under it; however loth it may be to sink, yet it cannot bear the pain; there are a few struggles, and throes, and pantings, and it may be a shriek or two, and then nature yields to the violence of the torments, sinks down, and the body dies. This is the death of the body. So it will be with the soul in hell; it will have no strength or power to deliver itself and its torment and horror will be so great, so mighty, so vastly disproportioned to its strength, that having no strength in the least to support itself, although it be infinitely contrary to the nature and inclination of the soul utterly to sink; yet it will sink, it will utterly and totally sink, without the least degree of remaining comfort, or strength, or courage, or hope. And though it will never be annihilated, its being and perception will never be abolished, yet such will be the infinite

depth of gloominess that it will sink into, that it will be in a state of death, eternal death.

The nature of man desires happiness; it is the nature of the soul to crave and thirst after well-being; and if it be under misery, it eagerly pants after relief; and the greater the misery is, the more eagerly doth it struggle for help. But if all relief be withholden, all strength overborne, all support utterly gone; then it sinks into the darkness of death.

We can conceive but little of the matter; we cannot conceive what that sinking of the soul in such a case is. But to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had it to endure the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, than ever it was; and that you never, never should be delivered!

But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a poor creature sink under it! How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable must the sinking of the soul be in such a case!

This is the death threatened in the law. This is dying in the highest sense of the word. This is to die sensibly; to die and know it; to be sensible of the gloom of death. This is to be undone; this is worthy of the name of destruction. This sinking of the soul under an infinite weight, which it cannot bear, is the gloom of hell. We read in Scripture of the blackness of

darkness; this is it, this is the very thing. We read in Scripture of sinners being lost, and of their losing their souls: this is the thing intended; this is to lose the soul: they that are the subjects of this are utterly lost.

APPLICATION

This subject may be applied in a use of awakening to impenitent sinners. What hath been said under this doctrine is for thee, O impenitent sinner, O poor wretch, who art in the same miserable state in which thou camest into the world, excepting that thou art loaded with vastly greater guilt by thine actual sins. These dreadful things which thou hast heard are for thee, who art yet unconverted, and still remainest an alien and stranger, without Christ and without God in the world. They are for thee, who to this day remainest an enemy to God, and a child of the devil, even in this remarkable season, when others both here and elsewhere, far and near, are flocking to Christ; for thee who hearest the noise, the fame of these things, but knowest nothing of the power of godliness in thine own heart.

Whoever thou art, whether young or old, little or great, if thou art in a Christless, unconverted state, this is the wrath, this is the death to which thou art condemned. This is the wrath that abideth on thee; this is the hell over which thou hangest, and into which thou art ready to drop every day and every night.

If thou shalt remain blind, and hard, and dead in sin a little longer, this destruction will come upon thee: God hath spoken and he will do it. It is vain for thee to flatter thyself with hopes that thou shalt avoid it, or to say in thine heart, perhaps it will not be; perhaps it will not be just so; perhaps things have been represented worse than they are. If thou wilt not be convinced by the word preached to thee by men in the name of God, God himself will undertake to convince thee, Ezekiel xiv. 4, 7, 8.

Doth it seem to thee not real that thou shalt suffer such a dreadful destruction, because it seems to thee that thou dust not deserve it? And because thou dust not see any thing so horrid in thyself, as to answer such a dreadful punishment? Why is it that thy wickedness doth not seem bad enough to deserve this punishment? The reason is, that thou lovest thy wickedness; thy wickedness seems good to thee; it appears lovely to thee;

thou dust not see any hatefulness in it, or to be sure, any such hatefulness as to answer such misery.

But know, thou stupid, blind, hardened wretch, that God doth not see, as thou seest with thy polluted eyes: thy sins in his sight are infinitely abominable.-Thou knowest that thou hast a thousand and a thousand times made light of the Majesty of God. And why should not that Majesty, which thou hast thus despised, be manifested in the greatness of thy punishment? Thou hast often heard what a great and dreadful God Jehovah is; but thou hast made so light of it, that thou hast not been afraid of him, thou hast not been afraid to sin against him, nor to go on day after day, by thy sins, to provoke him to wrath, nor to cast his commands under foot, and trample on them. Now why may not God, in the greatness of thy destruction, justly vindicate and manifest the greatness of that Majesty, which thou hast despised?

Thou hast despised the mighty power of God; thou hast not been afraid of it. Now why is it not fit that God should show the greatness of his power in thy ruin? What king is there who will not show his authority in the punishment of those subjects that despise it! And who will not vindicate his royal majesty in executing vengeance on those that rise in rebellion? And art thou such a fool as to think that the great King of heaven and earth, before whom all other kings are so many grasshoppers, will not vindicate his kingly Majesty on such contemptuous rebels as thou art?-Thou art very much mistaken if thou thinkest so. If thou be regardless of God's Majesty, be it known to thee, God is not regardless of his own Majesty; he taketh care of the honor of it, and he will vindicate it.

Think it not strange that God should deal so severely with thee, or that the wrath which thou shalt suffer should be so great. For as great as it is, it is no greater than that love of God which thou hast despised. The love of God, and his grace, condescension, and pity to sinners in sending his Son into the world to die for them, is every whit as great and wonderful as this inexpressible wrath. This mercy hath been held forth to thee, and described in its wonderful greatness hundreds of times, and as often hath it been offered to thee; but thou wouldst not accept Christ; thou wouldst not have this great love of God; thou despisedst God's dying love; thou trampledst the benefits of it under foot. Now why shouldst thou not have

wrath as great as that love and mercy which thou despisest and rejectest? Doth it seem incredible to thee, that God should so harden his heart against a poor sinner, as so to destroy him, and to bear him down with infinite power and merciless wrath? And is this a greater thing than it is for thee to harden thy heart, as thou hast done, against infinite mercy, and against the dying love of God?

Doth it seem to thee incredible, that God should be so utterly regardless of the sinner's welfare, as so to sink him into an infinite abyss of misery? Is this shocking to thee? And is it not at all shocking to thee, that thou shouldst be so utterly regardless as thou hast been of the honor and glory of the infinite God?

It arises from thy foolish stupidity and senselessness, and is because thou hast a heart of stone, that thou art so senseless of thine own wickedness as to think thou hast not deserved such a punishment, and that it is to thee incredible that it will be inflicted upon thee.-But if, when all is said and done, thou be not convinced, wait but a little while, and thou wilt be convinced: God will undertake to do the work which ministers cannot do. -Though judgment against thine evil works be not yet executed, and God now let thee alone, yet he will soon come upon thee with his great power, and then thou shalt know what God is, and what thou art.

Flatter not thyself, that if these things shall prove true, and the worst shall come, thou wilt set thyself to bear it as well as thou canst. What will it signify to set thyself to bear, and to collect thy strength to support thyself, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that omnipotent King, Jehovah? He that made thee, can make his sword approach unto thee. His sword is not the sword of man, nor is his wrath the wrath of man. If it were, possibly stoutness might be maintained under it. But it is the fierceness of the wrath of the great God, who is able to baffle and dissipate all thy strength in a moment. He can fill thy poor soul with an ocean of wrath, a deluge of fire and brimstone; or he can make it ten thousand times fuller of torment than ever an oven was full of fire; and at the same time, can fill it with despair of ever seeing an end to its torment, or any rest from its misery: and then where will be thy strength? What will become of thy courage then? What will signify thine attempts to

bear?

What art thou in the hands of the great God, who made heaven and earth by speaking a word? What art thou, when dealt with by that strength, which manages all this vast universe, holds the globe of the earth, directs all the motions of the heavenly bodies from age to age, and, when the fixed time shall come, will shake all to pieces? There are other wicked beings a thousand times stronger than thou: there are the great leviathans, strong and proud spirits, of a gigantic stoutness and hardiness. But how little are they in the hands of the great God! They are less than weak infants; they are nothing, and less than nothing in the hands of an angry God, as will appear at the day of judgment. Their hearts will be broken; they will sink; they will have no strength nor courage left; they will be as weak as water; their souls will sink down into an infinite gloom, an abyss of death and despair. Then what will become of thee, a poor worm, when thou shalt fall into the hands of that God, when he shall come to show his wrath, and make his power known on thee?

If the strength of all the wicked men on earth, and of all the devils in hell, were united in one, and thou wert possessed of it all; and if the courage, greatness, and stoutness of all their hearts were united in thy single heart, thou wouldst be nothing in the hands of Jehovah. If it were all collected, and thou shouldst set thyself to bear as well as thou couldst, all would sink under his great wrath in an instant, and would be utterly abolished: thine hands would drop down at once and thine heart would melt as wax.-The great mountains, the firm rocks, cannot stand before the power of God; as fast as they stand, they are tossed hither and thither, and skip like lambs, when God appears in his anger. He can tear the earth in pieces iii a moment; yea, lie can shatter the whole universe, and dash it to pieces at one blow. How then will thine hands be strong, or thine heart endure?

Thou canst not stand before a lion of the forest; an angry wild beast, if stirred up, will easily tear such a one as thou art in pieces. Yea, not only so, but thou art crushed before the moth. A very little thing, a little worm or spider, or some such insect, is able to kill thee. What then canst thou do in the hands of God? It is vain to set the briers and thorns in battle array against glowing flames; the points of thorns, though sharp, do

nothing to withstand the fire.

Some of you have seen buildings on fire; imagine therefore with yourselves, what a poor hand you would make at fighting with the flames, if you were in the midst of so great and fierce a fire. You have often seen a spider, or some other noisome insect, when thrown into the midst of a fierce fire, and have observed how immediately it yields to the force of the flames. There is no long struggle, no fighting against the fire, no strength exerted to oppose the heat, or to fly from it; but it immediately stretches forth itself and yields; and the fire takes possession of it, and at once it becomes full of fire. Here is a little image of what you will be the subjects of in hell, except you repent and fly to Christ. However you may think that you will fortify yourselves, and bear as well as you can; the first moment you shall be cast into hell, all your strength will sink and be utterly abolished. To encourage yourselves, that you will set yourselves to bear hell torments as well as you can, is just as if a worm, that is about to be thrown into a glowing furnace, should swell and fortify itself and prepare itself to fight the flames.

What can you do with lightnings? What doth it signify to fight with them? What an absurd figure would a poor weak man make, who, in a thunder-storm, should expect a flash of lightning on his head or his breast, and should go forth sword in hand to oppose it; when a stream of brimstone would, in an instant, drink up all his spirits and his life, and melt his sword!

Consider these things, all you enemies of God, and rejecters of Christ, whether you be old men or women, Christless heads of families, or young people and wicked children. Be assured, that if you do not hearken and repent, God intends to show his wrath, and make his power known upon you. He intends to magnify himself exceedingly in sinking you down in hell. He intends to show his great majesty at the day of judgment, before a vast assembly, in your misery; before a greater assembly many thousand fold than ever yet appeared on earth; before a vast assembly of saints, and a vast assembly of wicked men, a vast assembly of holy angels, and before all the crew of devils. God will before all these get himself honor in your destruction; you shall be tormented in the presence of

them all. Then all will see that God is a great God indeed; then all will see how dreadful a thing it is to sin against such a God, and to reject such a Saviour, such love and grace, as you have rejected and despised. All will be filled with awe at the great sight, and all the saints and angels will look upon you, and adore that majesty, and that mighty power, and that holiness and justice of God, which shall appear in your ineffable destruction and misery.

It is probable that here are some, who hear me this day, who at this very moment are unawakened, and are in a great degree careless about their souls. I fear there are some among us who are most fearfully hardened: their hearts are harder than the very rocks. It is easier to make impressions upon an adamant than upon their hearts. I suppose some of you have heard all that I have said with ease and quietness: it appears to you as great big sounding words, but doth not reach your hearts. You have heard such things many times: you are old soldiers, and have been too much used to the roaring of heaven's cannon, to be frighted at it. It will therefore probably be in vain for me to say any thing further to you; I will only put you in mind that ere long God will deal with you. I cannot deal with you, you despise what I say; I have no power to make you sensible of your danger and misery, and of the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. The attempts of men in this way have often proved vain.

However, God hath undertaken to deal with such men as you are. It is his manner commonly first to let men try their utmost strength: particularly to let ministers try, that thus he may show ministers their own weakness and impotency; and when they have done what they can, and all fails, then God takes the matter into his own hands. So it seems by your obstinacy, as if God intended to undertake to deal with you. He will undertake to subdue you; he will see if he cannot cure you of your senselessness and regardlessness of his threatenings. And you will be convinced; you will be subdued effectually: your hearts will be broken with a witness; your strength will be utterly broken, your courage and hope will sink. God will surely break those who will not bow. God, having girded himself with his power and wrath, hath heretofore undertaken to deal with many hard stubborn, senseless, obstinate hearts; and he never failed, he always did his work thoroughly.

It will not be long before you will be wonderfully changed. You who now hear of hell and the wrath of the great God, and sit here in these seats so easy and quiet, and go away so careless; by and by will shake, and tremble, and cry out, and shriek, and gnash your teeth, and will be thoroughly convinced of the vast weight and importance of these great things, which you now despise.

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Wicked Men Useful in their Destruction Only

Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree? Or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; The fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burnt: Is it meet for any work? [Ezekiel 15:2-4]

The visible church of God is here compared to the vine tree, as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in verses 6, 7, and 8. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. And it may be understood of mankind in general. We find man often in scripture compared to a vine. So in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall." And Psalm lxxx. 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" verse 14. "Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine." And Canticles ii. 15. "The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Isaiah v. at the beginning, "My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine." Jeremiah ii. 2l. "I had planted thee a noble vine." Hosea x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine." So in chapter 15 of John, visible Christians are compared to the branches of a vine.

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how, if left to himself, he must fall into mischief, and cannot help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman, or vine dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel was very much in their vineyards, about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people; and this latter is often in scripture expressly compared to the former.

In the words now read is represented,

1. How wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: "What is a vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" i.e. if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than any one of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham's parable, Judges ix. 13. "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?"

But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"

2. The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, viz. for fuel: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

DOCTRINE.

If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That it is very evident, that there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in acting, or in being acted upon, and disposed of.
2. That man can no otherwise be useful actively than by bringing forth fruit to God.
3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be passively useful, but in being destroyed.
4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in acting or being acted upon. If man be an useful sort of creature, he must be so either actively or passively: There is no medium. If he be useful to any purpose, he must be so either in acting himself, or else in being disposed of by some other; either in doing something himself to that purpose, or else in having something done upon him by some other to that purpose. What can be more plain, than that if man do nothing himself, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all useful? If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, viz. either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man cannot be useful actively, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God, than in serving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this reason, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: And he that gave him his being, made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz. to

serve and glorify his Maker.

Other creatures are made for inferior purposes. Inferior creatures were made for inferior purposes. But it is to be observed, that man is the creature that is highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There my be observed a kind of gradation, or gradual ascent, in the order of the different kinds of creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c. are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs and trees. These vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute creatures, again, are made for the use and service of the order above them; they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation, the next step from him is to God. He therefore is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such sort of creature as man; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and endowing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute creatures, without reason, are capable of these things, as well as man; Yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good, reason is rather an hinderance than an help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself with care, and fears of death, and other future evils, and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no

other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless then the all wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature as he is, having a body and soul, bodily senses, and rational powers. For this is he placed in such circumstances as he is, and the earth is given him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the creatures of this world. For this the sun shines on him, and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the rain falls on him, and the earth yields him her increase.

All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; made for their friends and neighbors, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man cannot be actively useful, or actively answer any purpose, otherwise than by actively glorifying God, or bringing forth fruit to God. Because,

1. That is not actively useful which doth not actively answer its end. That which doth not answer its end is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing is in vain. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is, as to its own activity, in vain.

2. That is as to its own activity altogether useless which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; and that because the ultimate end is the end of subordinate ends. The notion of a supreme end is, that it is the end of all inferior ends. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the highest end. The very notion of a subordinate end is, that it is in order to a further end. Therefore these inferior ends are good for nothing though they be obtained, unless they also obtain their end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their own sake, but only for the sake of the ultimate end. Therefore he that fails of his great end of all, doth as much altogether fail of his end,

and is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of an house is to support the house; and the subordinate end of the windows is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole is the benefit of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light: They are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.

So if man obtain his subordinate ends ever so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighborhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, they are altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are, as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one to another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. As in a clock one wheel moves another, and that another, till at last the motion comes to the hand and hammer, which immediately respect the eye and the ear, otherwise all the motions are in vain; so it is in the world, one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the

whole is to bring glory to God the maker or else all is in vain; and however a man may serve among his fellow creatures, in a private or public capacity, upon the whole he is in vain.

It may perhaps be objected, that a wicked man may, by being serviceable to the public, be useful to many who do bring forth fruit to God, and thus glorify him.

Answer 1. If he be so, he is no further useful than he brings glory to God. It all hath an ultimate respect to that glory that is brought to God, and is useful no further; as the motion of no one wheel of a clock is any further useful, than as it finally respects the right pointing of the hand, and striking of the hammer.

Answer 2. When it is thus, wicked men are useful only accidentally, and not designedly. Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he aims at; this is not his end; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And how ever this end be obtained, no thanks are due to him; it is as to him accidental. He is only the occasion, and not the designing cause of it. That fruit which is brought forth to the glory of God, is not brought forth by him, but by others.

The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him as though it were his fruit. He is not useful as a man, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may he useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be said for all that to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful passively, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue always in this world. God suffers them to live for the present, but it is only for a certain season. They are here in a transitory state. It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that such a tree should stand here always. It is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the goodness of God, or that his goodness should be spent upon them forever.

This world, though it is fallen, and is under a curse, and is a miserable place to what it once was, yet is full of the streams of divine goodness. But it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are these three different states ; a state wherein is nothing but good, which is the state of the blessed in heaven; a state wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly state ; and a state wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction and damnation. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former; it is not fit that they should be continued in the enjoyment of any of the goodness of God.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to devour the fruits of the earth, and consume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life, as God's wool and his flax, his corn, and wine, and oil, spent with him in vain. While a man lives in this world, the other creatures of the world are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labor and with their lives. The sun, moon, and stars, the clouds, fields and trees, all serve him. But it is not fit that these creatures should always be made to serve him, who brings forth no fruit to the Creator. Why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man, who will not be subject to him? Why should the creation be always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures are made subject to vanity for a little time; God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a

little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; and otherwise it would have been intolerable. Romans viii. 20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

The creature doth, as it were, groan by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while. Romans viii.22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here, but is ready to spew thee out. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.
Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7 "And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground always." God cannot be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful persons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of the wisdom of God, to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them, forever spending the fruits of his bounty in vain upon them. It would also be a disparagement to his justice; for this is a world where, "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men to be in, justice could not possibly take place. It would also reflect upon the holiness of God. Forever to uphold this world for an habitation of such persons, and forever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage sin and wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of in heaven. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The company is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society? The employments of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How

unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory? The enjoyments of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual enjoyments, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they cannot relish, but entirely nauseate.

The design of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not an habitation for wicked men. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of confusion, I Corinthians xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God, to take wicked men so near to himself into his glorious presence, to dwell forever in that part of the creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psalm v. 4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Therefore it would doubtless be impossible that the end of the existence of wicked men should be in any wise answered by the placing of them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, yet in suffering destruction may be useful. Although they be not useful actively, or by any thing which they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, yet may be good fuel, and be very useful in the fire. God can find use for the most wicked men; he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well as for vessels of mercy; as in an house there is use for vessels unto dishonor, as well as for vessels unto honor. 2 Timothy ii. 20. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." Proverbs xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of what ends God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's justice. It was the will of God to glorify his justice, as well as his mercy, on his creatures. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well

as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.

The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men. Revelation xvi. 5, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" And Revelation xix. 1, 2: "And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his majesty upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him, and contemn him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Romans ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"

It is often spoken of God, that he is a terrible God. It is a part of the majesty and glory of God, that he is a terrible God. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction. Exodus ix. 15, 16; and again, chapter xiv. 17: "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a greater sense of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Revelation xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isaiah lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me : For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness, seeing how vastly different their case is from their own. The view of the doleful condition of the damned will make them the more prize their own blessedness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice so much the more that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favor; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, are taken near to him, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love.

When they shall see the misery of the damned, it will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that God should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species with them, are no worse by nature than they, and have deserved no worse of God than they. When they shall look upon the misery of the damned, and consider how different their own state is from theirs, and that it is only free and sovereign grace that makes the difference, what a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! And how will it heighten their praises! With how much greater admiration and exultation of soul will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ their Redeemer, that ever he was

pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! And that he should so distinguish them as to spill his blood, and make his soul an offering, to redeem them from that so great misery, and to bring them to such exceeding happiness!

With what love and ecstasy will they sing that song in Revelation v. 9. 10. "Thou art worthy: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end which the apostle mentions why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Romans ix. 22, 23. there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" That is one end, then another is mentioned immediately after: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory ?"

APPLICATION

I. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to God. Seeing there is no other way in which they can be useful, or in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should God be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion against God, refuse; yet why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become the infinite greatness and majesty of God, to suffer himself to be disappointed and frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue, either a want of wisdom in God to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it.

God made all men that they might be useful; and if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! God made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively

and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them in what he doth with them!

It hath been shown, that there is no other way wherein this can be done, but by their destruction. Surely, therefore, it must be just and righteous that God should destroy them.

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in doing, in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, viz. in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us, that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live;" Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. God represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate God of the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and used all proper means to make it fruitful?

Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them. Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonder of patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever in your lives brought forth any fruit to God. Have you ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to God? By only seeking your worldly interest, you do not bring forth fruit to God. It is toot bringing forth fruit to God, for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such like things, merely in compliance

with the general custom. It is not to bring forth fruit to God, that you be sober, moral and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit and honor. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, or the esteem of men?

It is not to bring forth fruit to God, for men to pray, and read, and hear, and to be strict and diligent in religious and moral duties, merely from the fear of hell. What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is ne'er a devil in hell but would gladly do the same. Hosea x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done in any wise from love to God, or from any true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, because it benefits him, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 23. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Inquire, therefore, whether you ever in your lives did the least thing out of love to God. Have you not done all for yourselves? Zechariah vii. 5, 6. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? "

III. Another use of this subject may be of conviction and humiliation to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether useless creatures. And consider, what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages for

usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose!

We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is a worthless, insignificant person; and to be called so is taken as a great reproach. But consider seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do in any measure answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts? But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitableness, consider the following things.

1. How much God hath bestowed upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endowed you with noble powers, those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute creatures. He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of vastly extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world was, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing God, of contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels.

How lamentable and shameful it is, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and live in vain! How lamentable that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honor, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath done for you in the creation of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all the fulness of them, for the use of man, and hath given them to him. Psalm cxv. 16. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service. Genesis i. 28. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field. Genesis i. 29. "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars, for the use of man, to be to him for signs and seasons.

What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food, and otherwise to be for his convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, that after all these things he should be an useless creature in the world!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's common providence! Consider how nature is continually laboring for you. The sun is, at it were, in a ferment for mankind, unweariedly running his course from year to year, and from day to day, and spending his rays upon man, to put him under advantage to be useful; every day giving him light that he may have opportunity to behold the glorious wisdom of God, and to see and serve God. The winds and clouds are continually laboring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually laboring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field are laboring and spending their strength for you. And how many of the poor brute creatures are continually laboring for you, and spending their strength for you! How much of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!

Now, how lamentable will it be, if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Agreeably to Luke xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labors for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Romans viii. 20, 21, 22, where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the means of grace. How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath God sent into the world, in different ages, inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have the written word of God to instruct you!

How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature, and became a man, to be a prophet an teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.

How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labor of the ministers of God hath been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is written in Isaiah v. at the beginning, concerning the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the other creatures, that are inferior to you, do glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: For they all do answer their end, in the way in which nature hath fitted them for it; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator; while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and

burdens to the earth; as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, exhort you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavor to be in this way actively useful in the world. Here consider three things.

1. What an honor it will be to such poor creatures as you are, to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honor of the nature of man, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. It is what no other creature in this lower world can do, in the same manner as man. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so profitable to none as to yourselves; you cannot thereby be profitable to God. Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" You may thereby be profitable to your fellow creatures; yet not so much as to yourselves. The fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living. You will be more useful to yourselves than to any one else.
Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet God doth not require it of you without a reward. He will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable for you in this world to bring forth fruit to God; it will be exceedingly to your benefit while here. It will be pleasant to you to lead a fruitful and holy life; the pleasure will be beyond the labor. Beside this, God hath promised to such a life everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your destruction. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ, in John xv. 6, tells us, "if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they

are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless, it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.

God will have his end; he will accomplish it. Though all men and devils unite their endeavors, they cannot frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Proverbs xi. 1. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numbers xiv. 21, 22, 23. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."

"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" Matthew iii. 10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns is to be burned, as in Hebrews vi. 7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matthew xiii. 30. "Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in verses 40, 41, 42, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

So it is said of the chaff, Matthew iii. 12. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, as you have

hitherto done, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labor any more for sinners: The sun doth not run his course to shine upon them, the earth doth not bring forth her fruit to be consumed upon them there. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness on their lusts. In hell they can prejudice or encumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There the faithful servants and ministers of God will no longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labor or toil in digging about it, and manuring it.

In hell they will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world. In hell they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example. In hell they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance.

Hell, therefore, if you remain unfruitful and cumberers of the ground, will be the fittest place for you, and there you will surely have your portion assigned you. There God will get himself honor upon you; there he will magnify himself in your ruin, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and will be praised upon that account by the saints, at the day of judgment; and by all the host of heaven throughout everlasting ages.

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The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous

"Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and

prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."--Revelation 18:20

Introduction

In this chapter we have a very particular account of the fall of Babylon, or the antichristian church, and of the vengeance of God executed upon her. Here it is proclaimed that Babylon the great is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; that her sins had reached unto heaven, and that God had remembered her iniquity that God gave commandment to reward her, as she had rewarded others, to double unto her double according to her works; in the cup she had filled, to fill to her double, and how much she had glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow to give her. And it is declared, that these plagues are come upon her in one day, death, mourning, and famine; and that she should be utterly burnt with fire; because strong is the Lord who judgeth her.

These things have respect partly to the overthrow of the antichristian church this world, and partly to the vengeance of God upon her in the world to come. There is no necessity to suppose, that such extreme torments as are here mentioned will ever be executed upon papists, or upon the antichristian church, in this world. There will indeed be a dreadful and visible overthrow of that idolatrous church in this world. But we are not to understand the plagues here mentioned as exclusive of the vengeance which God will execute on the wicked upholders and promoters of antichristianism, and on the cruel antichristian persecutors, in another world.

This is evident by ver. 3, of the next chapter, where, with reference to the same destruction of antichrist which is spoken of in this chapter, it is said, "Her smoke rose up forever and ever;" in which words the eternal punishment of antichrist is evidently spoken of. Antichrist is here represented as being cast into hell, and there remaining forever after; he hath no place anywhere else but in hell. This is evident by ver. 20 of the

next chapter, where, concerning the destruction of antichrist, it is said, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Not but that the wicked antichristians have in all ages gone to hell as they died, and not merely at the fall of antichrist; but then the wrath of God against antichrist, of which damnation is the fruit, will be made eminently visible here on earth, by many remarkable tokens. Then antichrist will be confined to hell, and will have no more place here on earth; much after the same manner as the devil is said at the beginning of Christ's thousand years' reign on earth, to be cast into the bottomless pit, as you may see in the beginning of the twentieth chapter. Not but that he had his place in the bottomless pit before; he was cast down to hell when he fell at first: 2 Peter 2:4, "Cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness." But now, when he shall be suffered to deceive the nations no more, his kingdom will be confined to hell.

In this text is contained part of what John heard uttered upon this occasion; and in these words we may observe,

1. To whom this voice is directed, viz., to the holy prophets and apostles and the rest of the inhabitants of the heavenly world. When God shall pour out his wrath upon the antichristian church, it will he seen, and taken notice of, by all the inhabitants of heaven, even by holy prophets and apostles. Neither will they see as unconcerned spectators.

2. What they are called upon by the voice to do, viz. to rejoice over Babylon now destroyed, and lying under the wrath of God. They are not directed to rejoice over her in prosperity, but in flames, and beholding the smoke of her burning ascending up for ever and ever.

3. A reason given: for God hath avenged YOU ON HER; i.e., God hath executed just vengeance upon her, for shedding your blood, and cruelly persecuting you. For thus the matter is represented, that antichrist had been guilty of shedding the blood of the holy prophets and apostles, as in chap. 16:6, "For they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets." And

in ver. 24 of this context, "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all them that were slain on the earth." Not that antichrist had literally shed the blood, of the prophets and apostles; but he had shed the blood of those who were their followers, who were of the same spirit, and of the same church, and same mystical body. The prophets and apostles in heaven are nearly related and united to the saints on earth; they live, as it were, in true Christians in all ages. So that by slaying these, persecutors show that they would slay the prophets and apostles, if they could; and they indeed do it as much as in them lies.

On the same account, Christ says of the Jews in his time, Luke 11:50, "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." So Christ himself is said to have been crucified in the antichristian church, chap. 11:8: "And their dead; bodies shall lie in the street of the great City, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." So all the inhabitants of heaven, all the saints from the beginning of the world, and the angels also, are called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because of God's vengeance upon her, wherein he avenges them: they all of them had in effect been injured and persecuted by antichrist. Indeed they are not called upon to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but in seeing justice executed, and in seeing the love and tenderness of God towards them, manifested in his severity towards their enemies.

SECTION 1.

(When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.)

It is not only the sight of God's wrath executed on those wicked men who are of the antichristian church, which will be occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory; but also the sight of the destruction of all God's enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichrist or not, that alters not the case, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jesus Christ. All wicked men will at last be destroyed together, as being united in the same cause and interest, as being all of Satan's army. They will all stand

together at the day of judgment, as being all of the same company.

And if we understand the text to have respect only to a temporal execution of God's wrath on his enemies, that will not alter the case. The thing they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God's wrath upon his and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to see justice executed in part upon them, or to see the beginning of the execution of it in this world; for the same reason will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of just vengeance: Rejoice, for God hath avenged you on her.

Prop. I. The glorified saints will see the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men. This the Scriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world see each other's state. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are represented as seeing each other's opposite states, in the 16th chap. of Luke. The wicked in their misery will see the saints in the kingdom of heaven. Luke 13:28, 29, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."
So the saints in glory will see the misery of the wicked under the wrath of God. Isa. 64:24, "And they shall go forth and look on the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." And Rev. 14:. 9, 10, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The saints are not here mentioned, being included in Christ, as his members. The church is the fulness of Christ, and is called Christ, I Cor. 12:12+ So in the 19th chapter, ver. 2, 3, the smoke of Babylon's torment is represented as rising up forever and ever, in the sight of the heavenly inhabitants.

At the day of judgment, the saints in glory at Christ's right hand, will see the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror, will hear the judge pronounce sentence upon them, saying, " Depart, ye cursed, into

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and will see them go away into everlasting punishment. But the Scripture seems to hold forth to us, that the saints will not only see the misery of the wicked at the day of judgment, but the forementioned texts imply, that the state of the damned in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants; that the two worlds of happiness and misery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner, it will be; yet the Scriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will some way or other have a direct and immediate apprehension of each other's state. The saints in glory will see how the damned are tormented; they will see God's threatenings fulfilled, and his wrath executed upon them.

Prop. II. When they shall see it, it will be no occasion of grief to them. The miseries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they shall come to bear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or restraint, or any mitigation; it will doubtless cause anguish, and horror, and amazement vastly beyond all the sufferings and torments that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God. The Scripture calls this wrath, God's and the fierceness of his wrath; and we are told that this is to show God's wrath, and to make his power known; or to make known how dreadful his wrath is, and how great his power.

The saints in glory will see this, and be far more sensible of it than now we can possibly be. They will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them. They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises.-These two things are evidences of it:

1. That the seeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned, should cause grief in the saints in glory, is inconsistent with that state of perfect happiness in which they are. There can no such thing as grief enter, to be an alloy to the happiness and joy of that world of blessedness. Grief is an utter stranger in that world. God hath promised that he will wipe away all

tears from their eyes, and there shall he no more sorrow. Rev. 20:4, and chap. 7:17.

2. The saints in heaven possess all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happiness. The Scriptures teach that the saints in glory inherit all things. This God said in John's hearing, when he had the vision of the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:7. And the Scriptures teach us to understand this absolutely of all the works of creation and providence. 1, Cor. 3:21, 22, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours. Here the apostle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the future and eternal world, are the saints; not only life, but death; men, and angels, and devils, heaven and hell, are theirs, to contribute to their joy and happiness. Therefore the damned and their misery, their sufferings and the wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occasion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatsoever that did not contribute to their joy, but caused grief, then there would be something which would not be theirs.

That the torments of the damned are no matter of grief, but of joy, to the inhabitants of heaven, is very clearly expressed in several passages of this book of Revelation; particularly by chap. 16:57, and chap. 19 at the beginning.

SECTION II.

(Why the sufferings of the wicked will not be cause of grief to the righteous, but the contrary.)

1. Negatively; it will not be because the saints in heaven are the subjects of any ill disposition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of theirs will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent disposition: it will be the fruit of a perfect holiness and conformity to Christ, the holy Lamb of God. The devil delights in the misery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and because he delights in misery, for its own sake, from a malicious disposition.

It will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reasons, that the just damnation of the wicked will be an occasion of

rejoicing to the saints in glory. It will not be because they delight in seeing the misery of others absolutely considered. The damned suffering divine vengeance will be no occasion of joy to the saints merely as it is the misery of others, or because it is pleasant to them to behold the misery of others merely for its own sake. The rejoicing of the saints on this occasion is no argument, that they are not of a most amiable and excellent spirit, or that there is any defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting, which would render them of a more amiable disposition. It is no argument that they have not a spirit of goodness and love reigning in them in absolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greatest instances of it on earth, as much as the stars are higher than the earth, or the sun brighter than a glowworm.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because God had avenged them on her; it is not to be understood that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice, in seeing the justice of God executed, and in seeing his love to them in executing it on his enemies.

2. Positively; the sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no love nor pity to the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God's eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the glory of God will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all his works: and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contemplate but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them. God glorifies himself in the eternal damnation of the ungodly men. God glorifies himself in all that he doth; but he glorifies himself principally in, his eternal disposal of his intelligent creatures, some are appointed to everlasting life, and others

left to everlasting death.

The saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God: their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will exceedingly delight in seeing him glorified. The saints highly value the glory of God here in this, but how much more will they so do in the world to come They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence, than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls.-Particularly,

(1.) They will rejoice in seeing the justice of God glorified in the sufferings of the damned. The misery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what justice requires. They in heaven will see and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here. They will see how perfectly just and righteous their punishment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the supreme Governor of the world. They will greatly rejoice to see justice take place, to see that all the sin and wickedness that have been committed in the world is remembered of God, and has its due punishment. The sight of this strict and immutable justice of God will render him amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they see him who is their Father and eternal portion so glorious in his justice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the justice of God, about the absolute decrees of God, or any thing pertaining to the dispensations of God towards men. But divine justice in the destruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkness, and will shine as the sun without clouds, and on this account will they sing joyful songs of praise to God, as we see the saints and angels do, when God pours the vials of his wrath upon antichrist; Rev. 16:57 They sing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are his judgments, Rev. 19:16. They seeing God so strictly just will make them value his love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they shall see of the justice of God the more will they prize and rejoice in his love.

(2.) They will rejoice in it, as it will be a glorious manifestation of the power and majesty of God. God will show his own greatness in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This is mentioned as one end of the

destruction the ungodly: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ?" God will hereby show how much he is above his enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themselves against God. There are many open opposers of the cause and interest of Christ. "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." Then God will show his glorious power in destroying these enemies.

The power of God is sometimes spoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal destruction of his enemies: Exod. 15:6, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." But how much more glorious will it appear in his triumphing over, and dashing in pieces at once, all his enemies, wicked men and devils together, all his haughty foes! The power of God will gloriously appear in dashing to pieces his enemies as a potter's vessel. Moses rejoiced and sang when he saw God glorify his power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea. But how much more will the saints in glory rejoice when they shall see God gloriously triumphing over all his enemies in their eternal ruin! Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to disobey and condemn him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible God. To see the majesty, and greatness, and terribleness of God, appearing in the destruction of his enemies, will cause the saints to rejoice; and when they shall see how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize his favor! How will they rejoice that they are the objects of his love! How will they praise him the more joyfully, that he should choose them to be his children, and to live in the enjoyment of him!

It will occasion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater sense their own happiness, by seeing the contrary misery. It is the nature of pleasure and pain, of happiness and misery, greatly to heighten the sense of each other. Thus the seeing of the happiness of others tends to make men more sensible of their own calamities; and the seeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the sense of our own enjoyments.

When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the

damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellowcreatures are, who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the mean time are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity ; how will they rejoice!

This will give them a joyful sense of the grace and love of God to them; because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they, shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved, the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set his love upon them, that Christ hath laid down his life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy forever, O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which has redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellowcreatures! How joyfully will they sing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this!

SECTION III.

(An objection answered.)

The objection is, "If we are apprehensive of the damnation of others now, it in no wise becomes us to rejoice at it, but to lament it. If we see others in imminent danger of going to hell, it is accounted a very sorrowful thing, and it is looked upon as an argument of a senseless and wicked spirit, to look upon it otherwise. When it is a very dead time with respect to religion, and a very degenerate and corrupt time among a people, it is accounted a thing greatly to be lamented; and on this account, that at such times there are but few converted and saved, and many perish. Paul tells us, that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, because so many of the Jews were in a perishing state: Rom. 9:1, 2, 3, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience so bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my

heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." And if a neighbor die, and his death be attended with circumstances which look darkly as to the state of his soul, we account it a sorrowful thing, because he has left us no more comfortable grounds to hope for his salvation.

Why is it not then an unbecoming thing in the saints in glory to rejoice when they see the damnation of the ungodly ?

Ans. 1. It is now our duty to love all men, though they are wicked; but it will not be a duty to love wicked men hereafter. Christ, by many precepts in his word, hath made it our duty to love all men. We are commanded to love wicked men, and our enemies and persecutors. But this command doth not extend to the saints in glory, with respect to the damned in hell. Nor is there the same reason that it should. We ought now to love all, and even wicked men; we know not but that God loves them. However wicked any man is, yet we know not but that he is one whom God loved from eternity, we know not but that Christ loved him with a dying love, had his name upon his heart before the world was, and had respect to him when he endured those bitter agonies on the cross. We know not but that he is to be our companion in glory to all eternity.
But this is not the case in another world. The saints in glory will know, concerning the damned in hell, that God never loved them, but that he hates them, and will be forever hated of God. This hatred of God will be fully declared to them; they will see it, and will see the fruits of it in their misery. Therefore, when God has thus declared his hatred of the damned, and the saints see it, it will be no way becoming in the saints to love them, nor to mourn over them. It becomes the saints fully and perfectly to consent to what God doth, without any reluctance or opposition of spirit; yea, it becomes them to rejoice in every thing that God sees meet to be done.

Ans 2. We ought now to seek and be concerned for the salvation of wicked men, because now they are capable subjects of it. Wicked men, though they may be very wicked, yet are capable subjects of mercy. It is yet a day of grace with them, and they have the offers of salvation. Christ is as yet seeking their salvation; he is calling upon them, inviting and wooing them, he stands at the door and knocks. He is using many means with

them, is calling them, saying, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? The day of his patience is yet continued to them; and if Christ is seeking their salvation, surely we ought to seek it.
God is wont now to make men the means of one another's salvation; yea, it is his ordinary way so to do. He makes the concern and endeavors of his people the means of bringing home many to Christ. Therefore they ought to be concerned for and endeavor it. But it will not be so in another world; there wicked men will be no longer capable subjects of mercy. The saints will know, that it is the will of God the wicked should he miserable to all eternity. It will therefore cease to be their duty any more to seek their salvation, or to concerned about their misery. On the other hand, it will be their duty to rejoice in the will and glory of God. It is not our duty to be sorry that God hath executed just vengeance on the devils, concerning whom the will of God in their eternal state is already known to us.

Ans. 3. Rejoicing at the calamities of others now, rests not on the same grounds as that of the saints in glory. The evil of rejoicing at others' calamity now, consists in our envy, or revenge, or some such disposition is gratified therein: and not that God is glorified, that the majesty and justice of God gloriously shine forth.

Ans. 4. The different circumstances of our nature now, from what will be hereafter, make that a virtue now which will be no virtue then. For instance, if a man be of a virtuous disposition, the circumstances of our nature now are such, that it will necessarily, show itself by natural affection, and to be without natural affection is a very vicious disposition; and is so mentioned in Rom. i. 31. But natural affection is no virtue in the saints in glory. Their virtue will exercise itself in a higher manner.

Ans. 5. The vengeance inflicted on many of the wicked will be a manifestation of God's love to the saints. One way whereby God shows his love to the saints, is by destroying their enemies. God hath said, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." And it is often mentioned in Scripture, as instance of the great love of God to his people, that his wrath is so awakened, when they are wronged and injured. Thus Christ hath promised that God will avenge his own elect, Luke 18:. 7, and hath said, that "if any man offend one of his little ones, it were better for him

that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea," Matt. 18:6.

So the saints in glory will see the great love of God to them, in the dreadful vengeance which he shall inflict on those who have injured and persecuted them; and the view of this love of God to them will be just cause of their rejoicing. Thus, in the text, heaven and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over their enemies, because God hath avenged them of them.

SECTION IV.

(The ungodly warned.)

I shall apply this subject only in one use, viz., of warning to ungodly men. And in order to this, I desire such to consider,

1. How destitute of any comforting consideration your condition will be, if you perish at last. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will see none to condole your case, or to exercise any pity towards you, in your dreadful condition. You must bear these flames, you must bear that torment and amazement, day and night, forever, and never have the comfort of considering, that there is so much as one that pities your case; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

(1.) You have now been taught that you will have no pity from the created inhabitants of heaven. If you shall look to them, you will see them all rejoicing at the sight of the glory of God's justice, power, and terrible majesty, manifested in your torment. You will see them in a blissful and glorious state: you will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; you will see many come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in that glorious kingdom; and, will see them all with one voice, and with united joy, praising God for glorifying himself in your destruction. You will wail and gnash your teeth under your own torments, and with envy of their happiness; but they will rejoice and sing: Isa. 65:13, 14, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my

servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

(2.) God will exercise no pity towards you. If you might have his pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thousands of worlds. That would make your case to be not without comfort and hope. But God will exercise no pity towards you. He hath often said concerning wicked men, that his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity, Ezek. 5:11, and 7:4, 9, and 8:18. He will cast upon you, and not spare; you will see nothing in God, and receive nothing from him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceness of his wrath; nothing but the mighty falls or outpourings of wrath upon you every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity, or in the least to move him to lighten his hand, or assuage the fierceness and abate the power of your torments.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will have no pity on you. Though he had so much love to sinners, as to be willing to lay down his life for them, and offers you the benefits of his blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then he will have no pity upon you. You never will hear any more instructions from him; he will utterly refuse to be your instructor: on the contrary, he will be your judge, to pronounce sentence against you.

3. You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions or hellhounds to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who shall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate, and curse, and torment you. And you yourselves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourselves, and will be your own tormentors.

2. Consider what an aggravation what you have heard under this doctrine will be to your misery. Consider how it will be at the day of judgment, when you shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, when you shall begin to wail and cry, as knowing that you are those who are to be condemned; and perhaps you will be ready to fly to some of your godly friends; but you will obtain no help from them: you will see them unconcerned for you, with joyful countenances ascending to meet the

Lord, and not the less joyful for the horror in which they see you. And when you shall stand before the tribunal at the left hand, among devils, trembling and astonished, and shall have the dreadful sentence passed upon you, you will at the same time see the blessed company of saints and angels at the right hand rejoicing, and shall hear them shout forth the praises of God, while they hear your sentence pronounced. You will then see those godly people, with whom you shall have been acquainted, and who shall have been your neighbors, and with whom you now often converse, rejoicing at the pronunciation and execution of your sentence.

Perhaps there are now some godly people, to whom you are near and dear, who are tenderly concerned for you, are ready to pity you under all calamities, and willing to help you; and particularly are tenderly concerned for your poor soul, and have put up many fervent prayers for you. How will you bear to hear these singing for joy of heart, while you are crying for sorrow of heart and howling for vexation of spirit, and even singing the more joyful for the glorious justice of God which they behold in your eternal condemnation!

You that have godly parents, who in this world have tenderly loved you, who were wont to look upon your welfare as their own, and were wont to be grieved for you when any thing calamitous befell you in this world, and especially were greatly concerned for the good of your souls, industriously sought, and earnestly prayed for their salvation; how will you bear to see them in the kingdom of God, crowned with glory? Or how will you bear to see them receiving the blessed sentence, and going up with shouts and songs, to enter with Christ into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while you are amongst a company of devils, and are turned away with the most bitter cries, to enter into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels? How will you bear to see your parents, who in this life had so dear an affection for you, now without any love to you, approving the sentence of condemnation, when Christ shall with indignation bid you depart, wretched, cursed creatures, into eternal burnings ? How will you bear to see and hear them praising the Judge, for his justice exercised in pronouncing this sentence, and hearing it with holy joy in their countenances, and shouting forth the praises and hallelujahs of God and Christ on that account?

When they shall see what manifestations of amazement there will be in you, at the hearing of this dreadful sentence, and that every syllable of it pierces you like a thunderbolt, and sinks you into the lowest depths of horror and despair; when they shall behold you with a frightened, amazed countenance, trembling and astonished, and shall hear you groan and gnash your teeth; these things will not move them at all to pity you, but you will see them with a holy joyfulness in their countenances, and with songs in their mouths. When they shall see you turned away and beginning to enter into the great furnace, and shall see how you shrink at it, and hear how you shriek and cry out; yet they will not be at all grieved for you, but at the same time you will hear from them renewed praises and hallelujahs for the true and righteous judgments of God, in so dealing with you.

Then you will doubtless remember how those your glorified parents seemed to be concerned for your salvation, while you were here in this world; you will remember how they were wont to counsel and warn you, and how little you regarded their counsels, and how they seemed to be concerned and grieved, that there appeared no more effect of their endeavors for the good of your souls. You will then see them praising God for executing just vengeance on you, for setting so light by their counsels and reproofs. However here they loved you, and were concerned for you, now they will rise up in judgment against you, and will declare how your sins are aggravated by the endeavors which they to no purpose used with you, to bring you to forsake sin and practice virtue, and to seek and serve God; but you were obstinate under all, and would not hearken to them. They will declare how inexcusable you are upon this account. And the Judge shall execute the more terrible wrath upon you on this account, that you have made no better improvement of your parents' instructions, they will joyfully praise God for it. After they shall have seen you lie in hell thousands of years, and your torment shall yet continue without any rest, day or night; they will not begin to pity you then; they will praise God, that his justice appears in the eternity of your misery.

You that have godly husbands, or wives, or brethren, or sisters, with whom you have been wont to dwell under the same roof, and to eat at the same table, consider how it will be with you, when you shall come to part

with them, when they shall be taken and you left: Luke 17:34, 35, 36, "I tell you, in that night, there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left." However you may wail and lament, when you see them parted from you, they being taken and you left, you will see in them no signs of sorrow, that you are not taken with them; that you ascend not with them to meet the Lord in the air, but are left below to be consumed with the world, which is reserved unto fire, against the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

Those wicked men, who shall go to hell from under the labors of pious and faithful ministers, will see those ministers rejoicing and praising God upon the occasion of their destruction. Consider, ye that have long lived under Mr. Stoddard's ministry, and are yet in a natural condition, how dreadful it will be to you to see him who was so tenderly concerned for the good of your souls while he was here, and so earnestly sought your salvation, to see him rising up in judgment against you, declaring your inexcusableness, declaring how often he warned you; how plainly he set your danger before you, and told you of the opportunity that you had; how fully he set forth the miserable condition in which you were, and the necessity there was that you should obtain an interest in Christ; how movingly and earnestly he exhorted you to get into a better state, and how regardless you were; how little you minded all that he said to you; how you went on still in your trespasses, hardened your necks, and made your hearts as an adamant, and refused to return! How dreadful will it be to you to hear him declaring how inexcusable you are upon these accounts! How will you be cut to the heart, when you shall see him approving the sentence of condemnation, which the Judge shall pronounce against you, and judging and sentencing you with Christ, as an assessor in judgment; for the saints shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2); and when you shall see him rejoicing in the execution of justice upon you for all your unprofitableness under his ministry!

3. Consider what a happy opportunity you have in your hands now. Now your case is very different from the case of wicked men in another world, of which you have now heard; and particularly in the following respects.

(1.) God makes it the duty of all the godly now to be concerned for your salvation. As to those who are damned in hell, the saints in glory are not concerned for their welfare, and have no love nor pity towards them; and if you perish hereafter, it will be an occasion of joy to all the godly. But now God makes it the duty of all the godly, to love you with a sincere good-will and earnest affection. God doth not excuse men from loving you, nor your ill qualities: though you are wicked and undeserving, yet God makes it the duty of all sincerely to wish well to you; and it is a heinous sin in the sight of God for any to hate you. He requires all to be concerned for your salvation, and by all means to seek it. It is their duty now to lament your danger, and to pray for mercy to you, that you may be converted and brought home to Christ.

Now the godly who know you, desire your salvation, and are ready to seek, and pray for it. If you be now in distress about the condition of your souls, you are not in such a forsaken, helpless condition, as those that are damned; but you may find many to pray for you, many who are willing to assist you by their advice and counsels, and all with a tender concern, and with hearty wishes that your souls may prosper. Now some of you have godly friends who are near and dear to you; you are beloved of those who have a great interest in heaven, and who have power with God by their prayer's: you have the blessing of living under the same roof with them. Some of you have godly parents to pray for you, and to counsel and instruct you, who you may be sure will do it with sincere love and concern for you. And there is not only the command of God, God hath not only made it the duty of others to seek your salvation, but hath given encouragement to others to seek it. He gives encouragement that they may obtain help for you by their prayers, and that they may be instrumental of your spiritual good. God reveals it to be his manner, to make our sincere endeavors a mean of each other's good. How different is the case with you from what it is with those that are already damned! And how happy an opportunity have you in your hands, if you would but improve it!

(2.) Now you live where there is a certain order of men appointed to make it the business of their lives to seek your salvation. Now you have ministers, not to rise up in judgment against you; but in Christ's stead, to

beseech you to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. 5:20. God hath not only made it the duty of all to wish well to your souls, and occasionally to endeavor to promote your spiritual interests, but he hath set apart certain persons, to make it their whole work, in which they should spend their days and their strength.

(3.) Christ himself is now seeking your salvation. He seeks it by the forementioned means, by appointing men to make it their business to seek it; he seeks it by them; they are his instruments, and they beseech you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. He seeks it in commanding our neighbors to seek it. Christ is represented in Scripture, as wooing the souls of sinner's. He uses means to persuade them to choose and accept of their own salvation. He often invites them to come to him that they may have life, that they may find rest to their souls; to come and take of the water of life freely. He stands at the door and knocks; and ceases not, although sinners for a long time refuse him. He bears repeated repulses from them, and yet mercifully continues knocking, Saying, "Open to me, that I may come in and sup with you, and you with me." At the doors of many sinners he stands thus knocking for many years together. Christ is become a most importunate suitor to sinners, that he may become their sovereign. He is often setting before them the need they have of him, the miserable condition in which they are, and the great provision that is made for the good of their souls and he invites them to accept of this provision, and promises it shall be theirs upon their mere acceptance.

Thus how earnestly did Christ seek the salvation of Jerusalem, and he wept over it when they refused: Luke 19:41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And Matt. 23:37, "0 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Thus Christ is now seeking your salvation; such an opportunity have you now in your hands. Consider therefore how many means Christ is using with you, to bring you to salvation.

Besides those things which have been now mentioned, some of you have a

degree of the inward strivings and influences of the Spirit, which makes your opportunity much greater. You have Christ's internal calls and knockings. All the persons of the Trinity are now seeking your salvation. God the Father hath sent his Son, who hath made way for your salvation, and removed all difficulties, except those which are with your own heart. And he is waiting to be gracious to you; the door of his mercy stands open to you; he hath set a fountain open for you to wash in from sin and uncleanness. Christ is calling, inviting, and wooing you; and the Holy Ghost is striving with you by his internal motions and influences.

4. If you now repent, before it be too late, the saints and angels in glory will rejoice at your repentance. If you repent not till it is too late, they will, as you have heard, rejoice in seeing justice executed upon you. But if you now repent, they will rejoice at your welfare, that you who were lost, are found; that you who were dead, are alive again. They will rejoice that you are come to so happy a state already, and that you are in due time to inherit eternal happiness, Luke 15:10. So that if now you will improve your opportunity, there will be a very different occasion of joy in heaven concerning you, than that of which the doctrine speaks; not a rejoicing on occasion of your misery, but on occasion of your unspeakable blessedness.

5. If you repent before it is too late, you yourselves shall be of that joyful company. They will be so far from rejoicing on occasion of your ruin, that you yourselves will be of that glorious company, who will rejoice in all the works of God, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, and from whom sorrow and sighing shall flee away. You yourselves will be of those who will rejoice at the glorious display of God's majesty and justice in his wrath on his enemies. You will be of those that shall sing for joy of heart at the day of judgment, while others mourn for sorrow of heart, and bowl for vexation of spirit; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there shall never be any end or abatement of our joy.

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Sinners Delay Concerns of the Soul

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered,
Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." -- **Acts 24:25**

I. The subject of the Apostle's preaching.

II. How Felix was affected by it.

III. How he conducted himself in these circumstances.

Subject: Sinners delaying in putting off the great concern of their souls till a supposed more convenient season.

1. How sinners oftentimes do delay.

2. The reasons or causes why sinners do thus.

3. The end of it.

I. I would briefly observe how sinners do frequently delay and put off the great concern of their souls till a supposed more convenient season.

(1.) They sometimes put off to certain times they set, when they intend... Children sometimes... Shall know more — Know better how to pray and perform other duties of Religion that grown-up persons perform.

'Tis a common thing for young people. Till settled in the world.

"More convenient season:" a better inclination... not so much inclined to mirth and youthful vanities... fewer temptations... out of the way of young

company… more in the way of those who are solid and serious persons.

They esteem the present season very inconvenient for religion… being so very convenient for other purposes… Now a very convenient time to take liberty in mirth and youthful delights.

Many that are past their youth put off to a supposed more convenient season… when got through such and such particular affairs wherein they are now involved… when they hope they shall be more at liberty… or till in this and the other respect they are got into more convenient circumstances.

(2.) There are many that delay and put off without fixing any time in their mind… hoping for a more convenient future time…

The present time appears peculiarly inconvenient… feel a great opposition… have many temptations… hope it will be better with them… not feel such an aversion… fewer temptations…

Wait to have the Spirit of God strive with them.

Now a time of general deadness, and very inconvenient on that account… all the talk is of other things… put off till a time of the outpouring of the Spirit of God…

Or, perhaps, they are hoping for some greater advantage in other respects, some better means than now they enjoy, or a better concurrence of circumstances to favor a design of seeking God and their salvation.

II. The cause of persons thus delaying.

1. Stupidity… senselessness of their danger and necessity.

Insensible of the reality… insensible of the greatness… senseless of the heinousness of their sin… a brutish stupidity…

2. The importunity of lust… Job 20:12 — “Wickedness is sweet in his

mouth; he hides it under his tongue; he spares it, and forsakes it not, he keeps it still in his mouth."

3. Aversion to their duty.

4. Ignorance of themselves and self-confidence.

Trust in wisdom…strength…steadfastness…

5. A spirit of self-blinding… The blinding influence of a sinful self-love… promise themselves future opportunity… better opportunity… that God will hear…

6. The subtle temptations of the Devil…

III. The evil of it.

1. 'Tis exceeding wicked.

Direct disobedience…willful, resolved, wickedness….determine to continue in sin, and an allowance of it…

'Tis not only designedly committing one act of wickedness, but deliberately determining on a course of it… a course of manifested wickedness… neglect of many commands… gratification of many lusts… horrible ingratitude, abusing the past "long suffering"… horrible presumption on future mercy… contempt of offered mercy…

2. 'Tis exceeding foolish… Hereby they reject and miss a good deal of present good… willfully continue in a miserable state… bring a great deal of certain future misery upon them…

They run a dreadful risk…depend on innumerable uncertainties.. life continued… means of grace continued… use of reason… disposed… "more convenient season"…given one… if disposed whether succeed… whether God won't give over to delusion and to hard-heartedness…

Depend on many things that are not only uncertain, but very improbable... disposition... convenient season... thought when they were children... make their case more and more dangerous...depending on greater conveniences they make inconveniences for themselves... and by this means many thousands are actually undone...

APPLICATION:

This may be of warning to sinners not to delay and put off...

You have heard how common this is... Men are exceeding prone to it... Does your own experience confirm what has been said in this matter? And are there not some here who are now doing as has been represented? Have we not reason to think that there are many here present that say as Felix, "When..." etc.?

Undoubted, by what is everywhere to be seen at such a time of general deadness and regardlessness of religion as this is: a good evidence of the exceeding proneness to put off...

Let all take warning...

You have heard something in general of wickedness and folly; but here consider more particularly —

1. What guilt you contract: what a horrible thing it is to live in known and willful disobedience to God;... what great light ye will sin against if you...

2. What would you think of your delays if God should say to you, "Thou fool, this night...?"

3. If the future time you are putting off to should never come, how far it will probably be from being a "more convenient season."...

In many respects, far more inconvenient... God's anger increased... your heart harder, more stupid... every evil habit established... sloth... a carnal, worldly disposition... an habitual making light of things affecting such

awakenings... Satan's great opportunity to establish his interest... commonly an increase of inconvenience of outward circumstances... increase of temptations... commonly many inconveniences arise that never would be thought of... less likely ever to set about the work... Satan hath greater advantages if they do... more likely to be unsteady...more likely soon to be discouraged... the work is greater and harder that they have to do... less time to do it...

4. Others have lamented their folly in delaying... many when under concern... I who have long been in the work of the ministry... many on a death-bed.

5. How much otherwise you deal with God, and desire that God should deal with you.

6. If you continue still to delay after the warning you have this day, how aggravated your wickedness will be!

How have you been warned hereof before... and how have you gone from the meeting-house and still...

How can you excuse yourself to go home tonight and do nothing? or to do a little this evening, and then to-morrow, or in a few days?...

Consider how unreasonable this is...

And if now again, ... and there be a God,... how many you reasonably suppose He will resent it?

7. If you still... what danger that you will be utterly given up before the time comes... Giving up a common thing...

8. Inquire whether you yourself don't believe [that] there are many now in Hell through this very means?

Here some, perhaps, may say, to excuse themselves, and quiet their own consciences with respect to this, "I don't delay and put off the concern of my soul. I am in a way of seeking my salvation."

Here I would put two or three questions to such persons.

1. Whether you are in a way of minding this affair more than all other? "Seeking FIRST the kingdom of God," — "*one* thing."...

2. Is your reformation universal? Sins of omission... commission...

3. [Do you feel] as much pains as ever you take will be needful? Forsaken all practices you think you would need to forsake? Complied with all duties? As earnestly?... Do you intend to continue? How has secret, closet religion been with you? How have you kept the Sabbath? Attended the sermons? If not, ... you are guilty of the forementioned wickedness,...willful disobedience — guilty of folly. Therefore, if you have any regard to... think on your mercies, and "turn your feet,"... and whatever "your hands find to do."...

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Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
and brought them out, and said, Sirs what must I do to be saved?" -- **Acts 16:29, 30**

We have here and in the context and account of the conversion of the jailer, which is one of the most remarkable instances of the kind in the Scriptures. The jailer before seems not only to have been wholly insensible to the things of religion, but to have been a persecutor, and to have persecuted these very men, Paul and Silas; though he now comes to them in so earnest a manner, asking them what he must do to be saved. We are told in the context that all the magistrates and multitude of the city rose up jointly in a tumult against them, and took them, and cast

them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Whereupon he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And it is probable he did not act in this merely as the servant or instrument of the magistrates, but that he joined with the rest of the people in their rage against them. And that he did what he did urged on by his own will, as well as the magistrates' commands, which made him execute their commands with such rigor.

But when Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises at midnight, and there was suddenly a great earthquake, and God had in so wonderful a manner set open the prison doors, and every man's bands were loosed, he was greatly terrified. And in a kind of desperation, [he] was about to kill himself. But Paul and Silas crying out to him, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," then he called for a light, and sprang in, as we have the account in the text. We may observe:

First, the objects of his concern. He is anxious about his salvation. He is terrified by his guilt, especially by his guilt in his ill treatment of these ministers of Christ. He is concerned to escape from that guilty state, the miserable state he was in by reason of sin.

Second, the sense which he has of the dreadfulness of his present state. This he manifests in several ways.

1. By his great haste to escape from that state. By his haste to inquire what he must do. He seems to be urged by the most pressing concern, sensible of his present necessity of deliverance, without any delay. Before, he was quiet and secure in his natural state. But now his eyes are opened. He is in the utmost haste. If the house had been on fire over his head, he could not have asked more earnestly, or as being in greater haste. He could soon have come to Paul and Silas, to ask them what he must do, if he had only walked. But he was in too great haste to walk only, or to run; for he sprang in. He leaped into the place where they were. He fled from wrath. He fled from the fire of divine justice, and so hastened, as one that fled for his life.

2. By his behavior and gesture before Paul and Silas. He fell down. That he fell down before those whom he had persecuted, and thrust into the

inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks, shows what was the state of his mind. It shows some great distress, that makes such an alteration in him, that brings him to this. He was broken down, as it were, by the distress of his mind, in a sense of the dreadfulness of his condition.

3. His earnest manner of inquiring of them what he shall do to escape from this miserable condition; “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So distressed, that he is brought to be willing to do anything; to have salvation on any terms, and by any means, however difficult; brought, as it were, to write a blank, and give it in to God, that God may prescribe his own terms.

Doctrine. They who are in a natural condition, are in a dreadful condition. This I shall endeavor to make appear by a particular consideration of the state and condition of unregenerate persons.

I. As to their actual condition in this world.

II. As to their relations to the future world.

I. The condition of those who are in a natural state, is dreadful in the present world.

First, On account of the depraved state of their natures. As men come into the world, their natures are dreadfully depraved. Man in his primitive state was a noble piece of divine workmanship; but by the fall it is dreadfully defaced. It is awful to think that so excellent a creature as man is, should be so ruined. The dreadfulness of the condition, which unconverted men are in, in this respect, appears in the following things:

1. The dreadfulness of their depravity appears in that they are so sottishly blind and ignorant. God gave man a faculty of reason and understanding, which is a noble faculty. Herein he differs from all other creatures here below. He is exalted in his nature above them, and is in this respect like the angels, and is made capable to know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things. And God gave him understanding for this end, that he

might know him, and know heavenly things and made him as capable to know these things as any others. But man has debased himself and has lost his glory in this respect. He has become as ignorant of the excellency of God, as the very beasts. His understanding is full of darkness. His mind is blind. [It] is altogether blind to spiritual things. Men are ignorant of God, and ignorant of Christ, ignorant of the way of salvation, ignorant of their own happiness, blind in the midst of the brightest and clearest light, ignorant under all manner of instructions. Rom. 3:17, "The way of peace they have not known." Isa. 27:11, "It is a people of no understanding." Jer. 4:22, "My people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and have none understanding:" Jer. 5:21, "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding." Psa. 95:10, 11, "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." 1 Cor. 15:34, "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame."

There is a spirit of atheism prevailing in the hearts of men; a strange disposition to doubt of the very being of God, and of another world, and of everything which cannot be seen with the bodily eyes. Psa. 121:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." They do not realize that God sees them when they commit sin, and will call them to an account for it. And therefore, if they can hide sin from the eyes of men, they are not concerned, but are bold to commit it. Psa. 94:7, 8, 9, "Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Psa. 73:11, "They say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" So sottishly unbelieving are they of future things, of heaven and hell, and will commonly run the venture of damnation sooner than be convinced. They are stupidly senseless to the importance of eternal things. How hard to make them believe, and to give them a real conviction, that to be happy to all eternity is better than all other good; and to be miserable for ever under the wrath of God, is worse than all other evil. Men show themselves senseless enough in temporal things; but in spiritual things far more so. Luke 12:56, "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not

discern this time?" They are very subtle in evil designs, but sottish in those things which most concern them. Jer. 4:22, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Wicked men show themselves more foolish and senseless of what is best for them, than the very brutes. Isa. 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Jer. 8:7, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

2. They have no goodness in them. Rom. 7:18, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." They have no principle that disposes them to anything that is good. Natural men have no higher principle in their hearts than self-love. And herein they do not excel the devils. The devils love themselves, and love their own happiness, and are afraid of their own misery. And they go no further. And the devils would be as religious as the best of natural men if they were in the same circumstances. They would be as moral, and would pray as earnestly to God, and take as much pains for salvation, if there were the like opportunity. And as there is no good principle in the hearts of natural men, so there are never any good exercises of heart, never one good thought, or motion of heart in them. Particularly, there is no love to God in them. They never had the least degree of love to the infinitely glorious Being. They never had the least true respect to the Being that made them, and in whose hand their breath is, and from whom are all their mercies. However they may seem to do things at times out of respect to God, and wear a face as though they honored him, and highly esteemed him, it is all in mere hypocrisy. Though there may be a fair outside, they are like painted sepulchers. Within, there is nothing but putrefaction and rottenness. They have no love to Christ, the glorious Son of God, who is so worthy of their love, and has shown such wonderful grace to sinners in dying for them. They never did anything out of any real respect to the Redeemer of the world since they were born. They never brought forth any fruit to that God who made them and in whom they live and move and have their being. They never have in any way answered the end for which they were made. They have hitherto lived altogether in vain, and to no purpose. They never so much as sincerely obeyed one common of God; never so much as moved one

finger out of a true spirit of obedience to him, who make them to serve him. And when they have seemed outwardly to comply with God's commands, their hearts were not in it. They did not do it out of any spirit of subjection to God, or any disposition to obey him, but were merely driven to it by fear, or in some way influenced by their worldly interest. They never gave God the honor of one of his attributes. They never gave him the honor of his authority by obeying him. They never gave him the honor of his sovereignty by submitting to him. They never gave him the honor of his holiness and mercy by loving him. They never gave him the honor of his sufficiency and faithfulness by trusting in him. But have looked upon God as one not fit to be believed or trusted, and have treated him as if he were a liar. 1 John 5:10, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." They never so much as heartily thanked God for one mercy they have received in their whole lives, though God has always maintained them, and they have always lived upon his bounty. They never so much as once heartily thanked Christ for coming into the world and dying to give them an opportunity to be saved. They never would show him so much gratitude as to receive him, when he has knocked at their door; but have always shut the door against him, though he has come to knock at their door upon no other ground but only to offer himself to be their Savior. They never so much as had any true desires after God or Christ in their whole lives. When God has offered himself to them to be their portion, and Christ to be the friend of their souls, they did not desire it. They never desired to have God and Christ for their portion. They had rather be without them than with them, if they could avoid going to hell without them. They never had so much as an honorable thought of God. They always have esteemed earthly things before him. And notwithstanding all they have heard in the commands of God and Christ, they have always preferred a little worldly profit or sinful pleasure before them.

3. Unconverted men are in a dreadful condition by reason of the dreadful wickedness which there is in them.

(1) Sin is a thing of a dreadful nature, and that because it is against an infinitely great and an infinitely holy God. There is in the nature of man enmity against God, contempt of God, rebellion against God. Sin rises up

as an enemy against the Most High. It is a dreadful thing for a creature to be an enemy to the Creator, or to have any such thing in his heart as enmity against him; as will be very clear, if we consider the difference between God and the creature, and how all creatures, compared with him, are as the small dust of the balance, are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. There is an infinite evil in sin. If we saw the hundredth part of the evil there is in sin, it would make us sensible that those who have any sin, let it be ever so small, are in a dreadful condition.

(2) The hearts of natural men are exceedingly full of sin. If they had but one sin in their hearts, it would be sufficient to render their condition very dreadful. But they have not only one sin, but all manner of sin. There is every kind of lust. The heart is a mere sink of sin, a fountain of corruption, whence issue all manner of filthy streams. Mark 7:21, 22, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication's, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." There is no one lust in the heart of the devil, that is not in the heart of man. Natural men are in the image of the devil. The image of God is rased out, and the image of the devil is stamped upon them. God is graciously pleased to restrain the wickedness of men, principally by fear and respect to their credit and reputation, and by education. And if it were not for such restraints as these, there is no kind of wickedness that men would not commit, whenever it came in their way. The commission of those things, at the mention of which men are now ready to start, and seem to be shocked when they hear them read, would be common and general; and earth would be a kind of hell. What would not natural men do if they were not afraid? Mat. 7:17, "But beware of men." Men have not only every kind of lust, and wicked and perverse dispositions in their hearts, but they have them to a dreadful degree. There is not only pride, but an amazing degree of it: pride, whereby a man is disposed to set himself even above the throne of God itself. The hearts of natural men are mere sinks of sensuality. Man is become like a beast in placing his happiness in sensual enjoyments. The heart is full of the most loathsome lusts. The souls of natural men are more vile and abominable than any reptile. If God should open a window in the heart so that we might look into it, it would be the most loathsome spectacle that ever was set before our eyes. There is not

only malice in the hearts of natural men, but a fountain of it. Men naturally therefore deserve the language applied to them by Christ, Mat. 3:7, "O generation of vipers;" and Mat. 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers." Men, if it were not for fear and other such restraints, would not only commit all manner of sin, but to what degree, to what length would they not proceed! What has a natural man to keep him from openly blaspheming God, as much as any of the devils; yea, from dethroning him, if that were possible, and fear and other such restraints were out of the way? Yea, would it not be thus with many of those, who now appear with a fair face, and will speak most of God, and make many pretenses of worshipping and serving him? The exceeding wickedness of natural men appears abundantly in the sins they commit, notwithstanding all these restraints. Every natural man, if he reflects, may see enough to show him how exceedingly sinful he is. Sin flows from the heart as constantly as water flows from a fountain. Jer. 6:7, "As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness." And this wickedness, that so abounds in their hearts, has dominion over them. They are slaves to it. Rom. 7:14, "Sold under sin." They are so under the power of sin, that they are driven on by their lusts in a course against their own conscience, and against their own interest. They are hurried on to their own ruin, and that at the same time their reason tells them, it will probably be their ruin. 2 Pet. 2:14, "Cannot cease from sin." On account of wicked men's being so under the power of sin, the heart of man is said to be *desperately* wicked. Jer. 17:9 and Eph. 2:1, "Dead in trespasses and sins."

(3) The hearts of natural men are dreadfully hard and incorrigible. There is nothing but the mighty power of God will move them. They will cleave to sin, and go on in sin, let what will be done with them. Pro. 27:22, "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." There is nothing that will awe our hearts; and there is nothing that will draw them to obedience: let there be mercies or afflictions, threatenings or gracious calls and invitations, frowning, or patience and long-suffering, or fatherly counsels and exhortations. Isa. 26:10, "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

Secondly. The relative state of those who are in an unconverted condition is dreadful. This will appear if we consider,

1. Their relative state with respect to God; and that because,

(1) They are without God in the world. They have no interest or part in God. He is not their God. He hath declared he will not be their God (Hos. 1:9). God and believers have a mutual covenant relation and right to each other. They are his people, and he is their God. But he is not the covenant God of those who are in an unconverted state. There is a great alienation and estrangement between God and the wicked. He is not their Father and portion. They have nothing to challenge of God, they have no right to any one of his attributes. The believer can challenge a right in the power of God, in his wisdom and holiness, his grace and love. All are made over to him, to be for his benefit. But the unconverted can claim no right in any of God's perfections. They have no God to protect and defend them in this evil world: to defend them from sin, or from Satan, or any evil. They have no God to guide and direct them in any doubts or difficulties, to comfort and support their minds under afflictions. They are without God in all their affairs, in all the business they undertake, in their family affairs, and in their personal affairs, in their outward concerns, and in the concerns of their souls.

How can a creature be more miserable than to be separated from the Creator and to have no God whom he can call his own God? He is wretched indeed, who goes up and down in the world, without a God to take care of him, to be his guide and protector, and to bless him in his affairs. The very light of nature teaches that a man's God is his all. Jdg. 18:24, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" There is but one God, and in him they have no right. They are without that God, whose will must determine their whole well being, both here and forever. That unconverted men are without God shows that they are liable to all manner of evil. They are liable to the power of the devil, to the power of all manner of temptation, for they are without God to protect them. They are liable to be deceived and seduced into erroneous opinions, and to embrace damnable doctrines. It is not possible to deceive the saints in this way. But the unconverted may be deceived. They may become papists, or heathens, or atheists. They have nothing to secure them from

it. They are liable to be given up of God to judicial hardness of heart. They deserve it. And since God is not their God, they have no certainty that God will not inflict this awful judgment upon them. As they are without God in the world, they are liable to commit all manner of sin, and even the unpardonable sin itself. They cannot be sure they shall not commit that sin. They are liable to build up a false hope of heaven, and so to go hoping to hell. They are liable to die senseless and stupid, as many have died. They are liable to die in such a case as Saul and Judas did, fearless of hell. They have no security from it. They are liable to all manner of mischief, since they are without God. They cannot tell what shall befall them, nor when they are secure from anything. They are not safe one moment. Ten thousand fatal mischiefs may befall them, that may make them miserable for ever. They, who have God for their God, are safe from all such evils. It is not possible that they should befall them. God is their covenant God, and they have his faithful promise to be their refuge. But what mischief is there which may not befall natural men? Whatever hopes they may have may be disappointed. Whatever fair prospect there may seem to be of their conversion and salvation, it may vanish away. They may make great progress towards the kingdom of God, and yet come short at last. They may seem to be in a very hopeful way to be converted, and yet never be converted. A natural man is sure of nothing. He is sure of no good, nor is he sure of escaping any evil. It is therefore a dreadful condition that a natural man is in. They, who are in a natural state, are lost. They have wandered from God, and they are like lost sheep, that have wandered from their shepherd. They are poor helpless creatures in a howling wilderness, and have no shepherd to protect or to guide them. They are desolate, and exposed to innumerable fatal mischief's.

(2) They are not only without God, but the wrath of God abides upon them. John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is no peace between God and them, but God is angry with them every day. He is not only angry with them, but that to a dreadful degree. There is a fire kindled in God's anger; it burns like fire. Wrath abides upon them, which if it should be executed, would plunge them into the lowest hell, and make them miserable there to all eternity. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. God

has been angry with them every since they began to sin. He has been provoked by them every day, every since they exercised any reason. And he is provoked by them more and more every hour. The flame of his wrath is continually burning. There are many now in hell that never provoked God more than they, nor so much as many of them. Wherever they go, they go about with the dreadful wrath of God abiding on them. They eat, and drink, and sleep under wrath. How dreadful a condition therefore are they in! It is the most awful thing for the creature to have the wrath of his Creator abiding on him. The wrath of God is a thing infinitely dreadful. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion. But what is the wrath of a king, who is but a worm of the dust, to the wrath of the infinitely great and dreadful God? How dreadful is it to be under the wrath of the First Being, the Being of beings, the great Creator and mighty possessor of heaven and earth! How dreadful is it for a person to go about under the wrath of God, who gave him being, and in who he lives and moves, who is everywhere present, and without whom he cannot move a step, nor draw a breath! Natural men, inasmuch as they are under wrath, are under a curse. God's wrath and curse are continually upon them. They can have no reasonable comfort, therefore, in any of their enjoyments; for they do not know but that they are given them in wrath, and shall be curses to them, and not blessings. As it is said in Job 18:15, "Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation." How can they take any comfort in their food, or in their possessions, when they do not know but all are given them to fit them for the slaughter.

2. Their relative state will appear dreadful, if we consider how they stand related to the devil.

(1) They who are in a natural state are the children of the devil. As the saints are the children of God, so the ungodly are the children of the devil. 1 John 3:10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Mat 13:38, 39, "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil." John 8:44, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." They are, as it were, begotten of the devil. They proceed from him. 1 John 3:8, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil." As Adam begat a son in his own

likeness, so are wicked men in the likeness and image of the devil. They acknowledge this relation, and own themselves children of the devil, by consenting that he should be their father. They subject themselves to him, hearken to this counsels, as children hearken to the counsels of a father. They learn of him to imitate him, and do as he does, as children learn to imitate their parents. John 8:38, "I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father." How awful a state is this! How dreadful is it to be a child of the devil, the spirit of darkness, the prince of hell, that wicked, malignant, and cruel spirit! To have anything to do with him is very dreadful. It would be accounted a dreadful, frightful thing only to meet the devil, to have him appear to a person in a visible shape. How dreadful then must it be to be his child; how dreadful for any person to have the devil for his father!

(2) They are the devil's captives and servants. Man before his fall was in a state of liberty; but now he has fallen into Satan's hands. The devil has got the victory and carried him captive. Natural men are in Satan's possession and they are under his dominion. They are brought by him into subjection to his will, to go at his bidding, and do what he commands. 2 Tim. 2:26, "Taken captive by him at his will." The devil rules over ungodly men. They are all his slaves, and do his drudging. This argues their state to be dreadful. Men account it an unhappy state of life to be slaves; and especially to be slaves to a bad master, to one who is very hard, unreasonable, and cruel. How miserable do we look upon those persons, who are taken captive by the Turks, or other such barbarous nations, and put by them to the meanest and most cruel slavery, and treated no better than they treat their cattle! But what is this to being taken captive by the devil, the prince of hell, and made a slave to him? Had not a man better be a slave to anyone on earth than to the devil? The devil is, of all masters, the most cruel, and treats his servants the worst. He puts them to the vilest service, to that which is the most dishonorable of any in the world. No work is so dishonorable as the practice of sin. The devil puts his servants to such work as debases them below the dignity of human nature. They must make themselves like beasts to do that work to serve their filthy lusts. And besides the meanness of the work, it is a very hard service. The devil causes them to serve him at the expense of the peace of their own conscience, and

oftentimes at the expense of their reputation, at the expense of their estates, and shortening of their days. The devil is a cruel master; for the service upon which he puts his slaves is to undo themselves. He keeps them hard at work day and night, to work their own ruin. He never intends to give them any reward for their pains, but their pains are to work out their own everlasting destruction. It is to gather fuel and kindle the fire for themselves to be tormented in to all eternity.

(3) The soul of a natural man is the habitation of the devil. The devil is not only their father and rules over them, but he dwells in them. It is a dreadful thing for a man to have the devil near him, often coming to him. But it is a more dreadful thing to have him dwell with a man, to take up his constant abode with him; and more dreadful yet to have him dwell in him, to take up his abode in his heart. But thus it is with every natural man. He takes up his abode in his heart. As the soul of a godly man is the habitation of the Spirit of God, so is the soul of a wicked man the habitation of unclean spirits. As the soul of a godly man is the temple of God, so the soul of a wicked man is the synagogue of Satan. A wicked man's soul is in Scripture called *Satan's house*, and *Satan's palace*. Mat. 12:29, "How can one enter into a strong man' s house?" meaning the devil. And Luke 11:21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." Satan not only lives, but reigns, in the heart of a wicked man. He has not only taken up his abode there, but he has set up his throne there. The heart of a wicked man, is the place of the devil's rendezvous. The doors of a wicked man's heart are open to devils. They have free access there, though they are shut against God and Jesus Christ. There are many devils, no doubt, that have to do with one wicked man, and his heart is the place where they meet. The soul of a wicked man is, as it was said of Babylon, the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Thus dreadful is the condition of a natural man by reason of the relation in which he stands to the devil.

II. The state of unconverted men is very dreadful, if we consider its relation to the future world. Our state here is not lasting, but transitory. We are pilgrims and strangers here, and are principally designed for a future world. We continue in this present state but a short time; but we

are to be in that future state to all eternity. And therefore men are to be denominated either happy or miserable, chiefly with regard to that future state. It matters but little comparatively what our state is here, but it will continue but a short time; it is nothing to eternity. But that man is a happy man who is entitled to happiness, and he is miserable who is in danger of misery, in his eternal state. Prosperity or adversity in the present state alters them but very little because this state is of so short continuance.

First, those who are in a natural condition, have no title to any inheritance in another world. There are glorious things in another world. There are unsearchable riches, an unspeakable and inconceivable abundance; but they have nothing to do with it. Heaven is a world of glory and blessedness. But they have no right to the least portion of those blessings. If they should die and go out of the world as they are, they would go destitute, having no inheritance, no friend, no enjoyments to go to. They will have no God to whom they may go, no Redeemer to receive their departing souls, no angel to be a ministering spirit to them, to take care of them, to guard or defend them, no interest in that Redeemer, who has purchased those blessings. What is said of the Ephesians is true of those who are in a natural condition. “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” What a dreadful case they are in, who live in the world having no hope, without any title to any benefits hereafter, and without any ground to hope for any good in their future and eternal state!

Second, natural men are in a dreadful condition because of the misery to which they are exposed in the future world. This will be obvious, if we consider,

1. How great the misery is of which they are in danger;

2. How great is their danger of this misery.

1. How great the misery is of which they are in danger. It is great in two respects: (1) The torment and misery are great in themselves. And (2) They are of endless duration.

(1) The torment and misery, of which natural men are in danger, are exceedingly great in themselves. They are great beyond any of our words or thoughts. When we speak of them, our words are swallowed up. We say they are great, and exceedingly great, and very dreadful. But when we have used all the words we can to express them, how faint is the idea that is raised in our minds in comparison with the reality! This misery will appear very dreadful if we consider what calamities meet together in it. In it the wicked are deprived of all good, separated from God and all fruits of his mercy. In this world they enjoy many of the streams of God's goodness. But in the future world they will have no more smiles of God, no more manifestations of his mercy by benefits, by warnings, by calls and invitations. He will never more manifest his mercy by the exercise of patience and long-suffering, by waiting to be gracious. No more use any forbearance with them for their good. No more exercise his mercy by strivings of his Spirit, by sending messengers and using means. They will have no more testimonies of the fruits of God's goodness in enjoying food and raiment, and comfortable dwellings and convenient accommodations, nor any of the comforts of this life. No more manifestations of his mercy by suffering them to draw near to him with their prayers, to pray for what they need. God will exercise no pity towards them, no regard for their welfare. Cut off from all the comforts of this life, shut out of heaven, they will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But they shall be turned away from God and from all good into the blackness of darkness, into the pit of hell, into that great receptacle, which God has provided on purpose to cast into it the filthy, and polluted, and abominable of the universe. They will be in a most dreadful condition. They will have no friends. God will be their enemy, angels and the spirits of the just will be their enemies, devils and damned spirits will be their enemies. They will be hated with perfect hatred, will have none to pity them, none to bemoan their case, or to be any comfort to them. It appears that the state of the damned will be exceedingly dreadful in that they will suffer the wrath of God, executed to the full upon them, poured out without mixture. They shall bear the wrath of the Almighty. They shall know how dreadful the wrath of an Almighty God is. Now none knows, none can conceive. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Then they shall feel the weight of God's wrath. In this world they have the wrath of God abiding on them, but then it will be

executed upon them. Now they are the objects of it, but then they will be the subjects of it. Now it hangs over them, but then it shall fall upon them in its full weight without alleviation, or any moderation or restraint. Their souls and their bodies shall then be filled full with the wrath of God. Wicked men shall be as full of wrath as anything that glows in the midst of a furnace is of fire. The wrath of God is infinitely more dreadful than fire. Fire, yea the fiercest fire, is but an image and shadow of it. The vessels of wrath shall be filled up with wrath to the brim. Yes, they shall be plunged into a sea of wrath. And therefore hell is compared to a lake of fire and brimstone, because there wicked men are overwhelmed and swelled up in wrath, as men who are cast into a lake or sea, are swallowed up in water. O who can conceive of the dreadfulness of the wrath of an Almighty God! Everything in God is answerable to his infinite greatness. When God shows mercy, he shows mercy like a God. His love is infinitely desirable because it is the love of God. And so when he executes wrath it is like a God. This God will pour out without mixture. Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." No mixture of mercy or pity; nothing thrown into the cup of wrath to assuage or moderate it. "God shall cast upon him and not spare." (Job 27:22) They shall be cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God, where they shall be pressed down with wrath, as grapes are pressed in a wine-press. Rev. 14:19, "Cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God." God will then make appear in their misery how terrible his wrath is, that men and angels may know how much more dreadful the wrath of God is, than the wrath of kings, or any creatures. They shall know what God can do towards his enemies, and how fearful a thing it is to provoke him to anger.

If a few drops of wrath do sometimes so distress the minds of men in this world, so as to be more dreadful than fire, or any bodily torment, how dreadful will be a deluge of wrath. How dreadful will it be, when all God's mighty waves and billows of wrath pass over them! Every faculty of the soul shall be filled with wrath, and every part of the body shall be filled with fire. After the resurrection the body shall be cast into that great furnace, which shall be so great as to burn up the whole world. These

lower heavens, this air and this earth, shall all become one great furnace, a furnace that shall burn the earth, even to its very center. In this furnace shall the bodies of the wicked lie to all eternity, and yet live, and have their sense of pain and torment not all diminished. O, how full will the heart, the vitals, the brain, the eyes, the tongue, the hands, and the feet be of fire; of this fire of such an inconceivable fierceness! How full will every member, and every bone, and every vein, and every sinew, be of this fire! Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who can bear such wrath? A little of it is enough to destroy us. Psa. 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." But how will men be overwhelmed, how will they sink, when God's wrath is executed in so dreadful a degree! The misery which the damned will endure, will be their perfect destruction. Psa. 50:22, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

In several places the wicked are compared to the stubble, and to briers and thorns before devouring flames, and to the fat of lambs, which consumes into smoke. Psa. 37:20, "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." They shall be as it were ground to powder under the weight of God's wrath. Mat. 21:24. Their misery shall be perfect misery; and because damnation is the perfect destruction of a creature, therefore it is called death. It is eternal death, of which temporal death, with all its awful circumstances, is but a faint shadow of the state of the soul under the second death. How dreadful the state of the damned is, we may argue from the desert of sin. One sin deserves eternal death and damnation, which, in the least degree of it, is the total destruction of the creature. How dreadful, then, is the misery of which natural persons are in danger, who have lived some time in the world, and have committed thousands and thousands of sins, and have filled up many years with a course of sinning, and have committed many great sins, with high aggravations, who have sinned against the glorious gospel of Christ, and against great light, whose guilt if far more dreadful than that of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah! How dreadful is the punishment to which they are exposed, in which all their sins shall be punished according to their desert, and the uttermost farthing shall be exacted of

them! The punishment of one idle word, or sinful thought, would be more than they could bear. How then will they bear all the wrath that shall be heaped upon them for all their multiplied and aggravated transgressions? If one sin deserves eternal death and damnation, how many deaths and damnations will they have accumulated upon them at once! Such an aggravated, multiplied death must they die every moment, and always continue dying such a death, and yet never be dead. Such misery as this may well be called the blackness of darkness. Hell may well be called the bottomless pit, if the misery is so unfathomably great. Men sometimes have suffered extreme torment in this world. Dreadful have been the sufferings of some of the martyrs. But how little those are, in comparison of the sufferings of the damned, we may learn from 1 Pet. 4:16, 17, 18, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” The apostle is here speaking of the sufferings of Christians. And from thence he argues, that seeing their sufferings are so great, how unspeakably great will be the sufferings of the wicked! And if judgment begins with them, what shall be the end of those who obey not the gospel! As much as to say, the sufferings of the righteous are nothing to what those, who obey not the gospel, are. How dreadful, therefore, does this argue their misery to be! Well may the sinners in Zion be afraid, and fearful, and surprised. Well may the kings of the earth, and the great men, and rich men, and chief captains, and every bond man, and every free man, hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, at Christ’s second coming; and cry and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Well may there be weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell, where there is such misery. Thus the misery of those who are in a natural condition, is, in itself, exceedingly great.

(2) It is of endless duration. The misery is not only amazingly great, and extreme, but of long continuance; yea, of infinitely long continuance. It never will have any end. There will be no deliverance, no rest, no hope.

But they will last throughout all eternity. Eternity is a thing in the thought of which our minds are swallowed up. As it is infinite in itself, so it is infinitely beyond the comprehension of our minds. The more we think of it, the more amazing will it seem to us. Eternity is a duration, to which a long period of time bears no greater proportion than a short period. A thousand years, or a thousand ages, bear no greater proportion to eternity than a minute; or which is the same thing, a thousand ages are as much less than eternity as a minute. A minute comes as near an equality to it; or you may take as many thousand ages out of eternity, as you can minutes. If a man by the utmost skill in arithmetic, should denote or enumerate a great number of ages, and should rise by multiplication to ever so prodigious numbers, should make as great figures as he could, and rise in multiplying as fast as he could, and should spend his life in multiplying; the product of all would be no nearer equal to the duration which the wicked must spend in the misery of hell, than one minute. Eternity is that, which cannot be made less by subtraction. If we take from eternity a thousand years or ages, the remainder is not the less for it. Eternity is that which will for ever be but beginning, and that because all the time which is past, let it be ever so long, is but a point to what remains. The wicked, after they have suffered millions of ages, will be, as it were, but in the first point, only setting out in their sufferings. It will be no comfort to them that so much is gone, for they will have none the less to bear. There will never a time come, when, if what is past is compared to what is to come, it will not be as a point, and as nothing. The continuance of their torment cannot be measured out by revolutions of the sun, or moon, or stars, by centuries or ages. They shall continue suffering after these heavens and this earth shall wax old as a garment, till the whole visible universe is dissolved. Yea, they shall remain in their misery through millions of such ages as are equal to the age of the sun, and moon, and stars, and still it will be all one, as to what remains, still no nearer the end of their misery. Mat. 25:41, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Mark 9:44, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Rev. 20:10, “They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” And 14:11, “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” The damned in hell in their misery will be in absolute despair. They shall know that their misery will have no end, and therefore they will have no

hopes of it. O, who can conceive the dreadfulness of such despair as this in the midst of such torment! Who can express, or think anything how dreadful the thought of eternity is to them, who are under so great torment! To what unfathomable depths of woe will it sink them! With what a gloom and blackness of darkness will it fill them! What a boundless gulf of sorrow and woe is the thought of eternity to the damned, who shall be in absolute and utter despair of any deliverance!

How dreadful, then, is the condition of those who are in a natural state, who are in danger of such misery.

2. The dreadfulness of their condition will appear by considering how great their danger is of this misery. This will be obvious from the following things:

(1) Their danger is such, that continuing in their present state, they will unavoidably sink into this misery.

First, the state in which natural persons now are, naturally tends to it. And this, because they are separate from God, and destitute of any spiritual good. The soul that is in a state of separation from its Creator, must be miserable because he is separate from the fountain of all good. He that is separate from God, is in great danger of ruin because he is without any defense. He that is separate from God, must perish, if he continue so, because it is from God only that he can have those supplies which can make him happy. It is with the soul as it is with the body. The body without supplies of sustenance will miserably famish and die. So the souls of natural men are in a famishing condition. They are separate from God, and therefore are destitute of any spiritual good, which can nourish the soul, or keep it alive; like one that is remote in a wilderness, where he has nothing to eat or drink, and therefore, if he continue so, will unavoidably die. So the state of natural men naturally tends to that dreadful misery of the damned in hell, because they are separate from God.

Second, they are under the power of a mortal disease, which if it not healed, will surely bring them to this death. They are under the power and dominion of sin, and sin is a mortal disease of the soul. If it is not

cured, it will certainly bring them to death; *viz.* To that second death of which we have heard. The infection of the disease has powerfully seized their vital parts. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. The disease is inveterate. The infection is spread throughout the whole frame. The very nature is corrupted and ruined; and the whole must come to ruin, if God by his mighty power does not heal the disease. The soul is under a mortal wound; a would deep and dreadfully confirmed. Its roots reach the most vital parts; yea, they are principally seated there. There is a plague upon the heart, which corrupts and destroys the source of life, ruins the whole frame of nature, and hastens an inevitable death. There is a most deadly poison, which has been infused into, and spread over, the man. He has been bitten by a fiery serpent, whose bite issues in a most tormenting death. Sin is that, which does as naturally tend to the misery and ruin of the soul, as the most mortal poison tends to the death of the body. We look upon persons far gone in a consumption, or with an incurable cancer, or some malady, as in doleful circumstances. But that mortal disease, under whose power natural men are, makes their case a thousand times more doleful. That mortal disease of natural men does, as it were, ripen them for damnation. We read of the clusters of the vine of the earth being for the wine-press of the wrath of God, Rev. 14:18, where by the clusters of the vine are meant wicked men. The wickedness of natural men tends to sink them down to hell, as the weight of a stone causes it to tend toward the center of the earth. Natural men have, as it were, the seeds of hell within their own hearts. Those principles of sin and corruption, which are in them, if they remain unmortified, will at length breed the torment of hell in them, and that necessarily, and of their own tendency. The soul that remains under the power of sin will at length take fire of itself. Hell will kindle in them.

(2) If they continue in their present state, this misery appears to be unavoidable, if we consider the justice and truth of God.

First, if they continue in their present condition, so surely as God is just, they shall suffer the eternal misery of which we have heard. The honor of God's justice requires it, and God will not disparage his own justice. He will not deny his own honor and glory, but will glorify himself on the wicked as well as the godly. He will not lose his honor of any one of his

creatures which he has made.

It is impossible that God should be frustrated or disappointed. And so surely as God will not be frustrated, so surely shall they who continue in a natural condition, suffer that eternal misery, of which we have heard. The avenging justice of God is one of the perfections of his nature. And he will glorify all his perfections. God is unalterable in this as well as his other perfections. His justice shall and must be satisfied. He has declared that he will by no means clear the guilty, Exo. 34:7. And that he will not justify the wicked, Exo. 23:7. And that he will not at all acquit the wicked, Nah. 1:3. God is a strictly just Judge. When men come to stand before him, he will surely judge them according to their works. They that have guilt lying upon them, he will surely judge according to their guilt. The debt they owe to justice must be paid to the uttermost farthing. It is impossible that anyone, who dies in his sins, should escape everlasting condemnation and punishment before such a Judge. He will render to every man according to his deeds. Rom. 2:8, "Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." It is impossible to influence God to be otherwise than just in judging ungodly men. There is no bribing him. He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. Deu. 10:17, "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible to influence him to be otherwise than strictly just, by any supplications, or tears, or cries. God is inexorably just. The cries and the moans of the malefactor will have no influence upon this Judge to pass a more favorable judgment on them, so as in any way to acquit or release them. The eternal cries, and groans, and lamentations of the wicked will have no influence upon him. Though they are ever so long continued, they will not prevail upon God.

Second, so surely as God is true, if they die in the state they are now in, they shall suffer that eternal misery. God has threatened it in a positive and absolute manner. The threatenings of the law are absolute. And they, who are in a natural state, are under the condemnation of the law. The threatening of the law takes hold upon them. And if they continue under guilt, God is obliged by his word to punish them according to that threatening. And he has often, in the most positive and absolute manner,

declared that the wicked shall be cast into hell; that they who believe not shall be damned; that they shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and that their misery shall never have an end. And therefore, if there be any truth in God, it shall surely be so. It is as impossible that he who dies in a natural condition, should escape suffering that eternal misery, as that God should lie. The Word of God is stronger and firmer than mountains of brass, and shall not fail. We shall sooner see heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of all that God hath said in his Word not be fulfilled. So much for the first thing, that evinces the greatness of the danger that natural men are in of hell; *viz.* that they will unavoidably sink into hell, if they continue in such a condition.

(3) Their danger will appear very dreadful, if we consider how uncertain it is, whether they will ever get out of this condition. It is very uncertain whether they will ever be converted. If they should die in their present condition, their misery is certain and inevitable. But it is very doubtful whether they will not die in such a condition, their misery is certain and inevitable. But it is very doubtful whether they will not die in such a condition. There is great danger that they will; great danger of their never being converted. And this will appear, if we consider two things.

First, they have nothing on which to depend for conversion. They have nothing in the world, by which to persuade themselves that they shall ever be converted. Left to themselves, they never will repent and turn to God. If they are ever converted, therefore, it is God who must do it. But they have no promise of God, that they ever shall be converted. They do not know how soon they may die. God has not promised them long life; and he has not promised them that they shall be ready for death before they die. It is but a peradventure, whether God will ever give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. 2 Tim. 2:25. Their resolutions are not to be depended on. If they have convictions, they are not to be depended on; they may lose those convictions. Their conversion depends on innumerable uncertainties. It is very uncertain, then, whether they will be converted before they die.

Second, another thing which shows the danger there is that they shall never be converted, is, that there are but few, comparatively, who are ever

converted. But few of those, who have been natural persons in time past, have been converted. Most of them have died unconverted. So it has been in all ages, and hence we have reason to think that but few of them, who are uncovered now, will ever be converted; that most of them will die unconverted, and will go to hell. Natural persons are ready to flatter themselves, that they shall be converted. They think there are signs of it. But a man would not run the venture of so much as a sixpence in such an uncertainty as they are, about their ever being converted, or not going to hell. This shows the doleful condition of natural men, as it is uncertain whether they shall ever be converted.

Third, they who are in a natural condition are in danger of going to hell every day. Those now present, who are in a natural condition, are in danger of dropping into hell before tomorrow morning. They have nothing to depend on, to keep them out of hell one day, or one night. We know not what a day may bring forth. God has not promised to spare them one day; and he is every day angry with them. The black clouds, that are full of the thunder of God's wrath, hang over their heads every day, and they know not how soon the thunder will break forth upon their heads. Natural men are in Scripture compared to those that walk in slippery places. They know not when their feet will slip. They are continually in danger. Psa. 73:18, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment." Natural men hang over the pit of hell, as it were, by a thread, that has a moth continually gnawing it. They know not when it will snap in twain, and let them drop. They are in the utmost uncertainty. They are not secure one moment. A natural man never goes to sleep, but that he is in danger of waking in hell. Experience abundantly teaches the matter to be so. It shows, by millions of instances, that man is not certain of life one day. And how common a thing is it for death to come suddenly and unexpectedly! And thousands, beyond all reasonable question, are going to hell every day, and death comes upon them unexpectedly. "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." It is a dreadful condition that natural persons are in upon this account. And no wise person would be in their condition for a quarter of an hour for the whole world, because such is the danger that

they will drop into hell before that quarter of an hour is expired.

Thus I have shown how dreadful the condition of natural men is, relatively considered. I shall mention two or three things more, which yet further make it appear how doleful their condition is.

1. The longer it continues, the worse it grows. This is an awful circumstance in the condition of a natural man. Any disease is looked upon as the more dreadful, for its growing and increasing nature. Thus a cancer and gangrene are regarded as dreadful calamities, because they continually grow and spread. And the faster they grow, the more dreadful are they accounted. It would be dreadful to be in a natural condition, if a person could continue as he is, and his condition grow no worse; if he could live in a natural condition, and never have it any more dreadful, than when he first begins to sin. But it is yet much more dreadful, when we consider that it every day becomes worse and worse. The condition of natural men is worse today than it was yesterday, and that on several accounts. The heart grows more and more polluted and hardened. The longer sin continues unmortified, the more is it strengthened and rooted. Their guilt also grows greater, and hell every day grows hotter; for they are every day adding sin to sin, and so their iniquity is increasing over their heads more and more. Every new sin adds to the guilt. Every sin deserves eternal death for its punishment. And therefore in every sin that a man commits, there is so much added to the punishment, to which he lies exposed. There is, as it were, another eternal death added to augment his damnation. And how much is added to the account in God's book every day. How many new sins are set down, that all may be answered for; each one of which sins must be punished, that by itself would be an eternal death! How fast do wicked men heap up guilt, and treasure up wrath, so long as they continue in a natural condition! How is God more and more provoked, his wrath more and more incensed; and how does hell-fire continually grow hotter and hotter! If a man has lived twenty years in a natural condition, the fire has been increased every day since he has lived. It has been, as it were, blown up to a greater and greater degree of fierceness. Yea, how dreadfully does one day's continuance in sin add to the heat of hell-fire!

2. All blessings are turned into curses to those who live and die in such a

condition. Those things which are most pleasant and comfortable, and which men esteem the blessings of life, are but curses unto such; as their meat, and their drink, and their raiment. There is a curse goes with every mouthful of meat, and every drop of drink, to such a person. There is a curse with his raiment which he puts on. It all contributes to his misery. Though it may please him, yet it does him no good, but he is the more miserable for it. If he has any enjoyment which is sweet and pleasant to him, the pleasure is a curse to him. He is really the more miserable for it. It is an occasion of death to him. His possessions, which he values himself upon, and sets his heart upon, are turned into a curse to him. His house has the curse of God upon it, and his table is a snare and a trap to him. Psa. 69:22. His bed has God's curse upon it. When he lies down to sleep, a curse attends his rest; and when he goes forth to labor, he is followed with a curse on that. The curse of God is upon his fields, on his corn, and herds, and all he has. If he has friends and relations, who are pleasant and dear to him, they are no blessings to him. He receives no comfort by them, but they prove a curse to him. I say it is thus with those who live and die in a natural condition. Deu. 28:16, etc., "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket, and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thing hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me." Man's faculties of reason and understanding, and all his natural powers, are turned into a curse. Yea, spiritual mercies and privileges shall also be turned into a curse to those who live and die in a natural condition. A curse goes with the worship of God, and with sabbaths and sacraments, with instruction, and counsels, and warnings, and with the most precious advantages. They are all turned into a curse. They are a savior of death unto death. They do but harden the heart, and aggravate the guilt and misery, and inflame the divine wrath. Isaiah 6:9, 10. "Go, make the heart of this people fat." 2 Cor. 2:16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death." It will only be an occasion of their misery, that God ever sent Christ into the world to save sinners. That which is in itself so glorious a manifestation of God's mercy,

so unspeakable a gift, that which is an infinite blessing to others who receive Christ, will be a curse unto them. 1 Pet. 2:8, “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” The blood of Christ, which is the price of eternal life and glory to some, is an occasion of sinking them vastly the lower into eternal burnings. And that is the case of such persons. The more precious any mercies are in themselves, the more of a curse are they to them. The better the things are in themselves, the more will they contribute to their misery. And spiritual privileges, which are in themselves greater mercies than any outward enjoyments, will above all other things prove a curse to them. Nothing will enhance their condemnation so much as these. On account of these, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them. Yea, so doleful is the condition of natural men, that if they live and die in that condition, not only the enjoyments of life, but life itself, will be a curse to them. The longer they live, the more miserable will they be; the sooner they die, the better. If they live long in such a condition, and die in it at last, it would have been better for them if they had died before. It would have been far better for them to have spent the time in hell, than on earth. Yea, better for them to have spent ten thousand years in hell, instead of one on earth. When they look back, and consider what enjoyments they have had, they will wish they had never had them. Though when on earth they set their hearts on their earthly enjoyments, they will hereafter wish they had been without them; for they will see they have only fitted them for the slaughter. They will wish they never had had their houses and lands, their garments, their earthly friends, and their earthly possessions. And so they will wish that they had never enjoyed the light of the gospel, that they had been born among the heathen in some of the most dark and barbarous places of the earth. They will wish that Christ had never come into the world to die for sinners, so as to give men any opportunity to be saved. They will wish that God had cast off fallen man, as he did the fallen angels, and had never made him the offer of a Savior. They will wish that they had died sooner, and had not had so much opportunity to increase their guilt and their misery. They will wish they had died in their childhood, and been sent to hell then. They will curse the day that ever they were born, and wish they had been made vipers and scorpions, or anything, rather than rational creatures.

3. They have no security from the most dismal horrors of mind in this life. They have no security, but their stupidity. A natural man can have no comfort or peace in a natural condition, but that of which blindness and senselessness are the foundation. And from what has been said, that is the very evil. A natural man can have no comfort in anything in this world any further, than thought and consideration of mind are kept down in him. As you make a condemned malefactor senseless of his misery by putting him to sleep with opium, or make him merry just before his execution by giving him something to deprive him of the use of reason, so that he shall not be sensible of his own circumstances. Otherwise, there is no peace or comfort, which a natural man can have in a natural condition. Isa. 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Job 15:20, "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days. A dreadful sound is in his ears." The doleful state of a natural man appears especially from the horror and amazement to which he is liable on a death-bed. To have the heavy hand of God upon one in some dangerous sickness, which is wasting and consuming the body, and likely to destroy it, and to have a prospect of approaching death, and of soon going into eternity, there to be in such a condition as this: to what amazing apprehensions must the sinner be liable! How dismal must his state be, when the disease prevails, so that there is no hope that he shall recover, when the physician begins to give him over, and friends to despair of his life; when death seems to hasten on, and he is at the same time perfectly blind to any spiritual object, altogether ignorant of God, of Christ, and of the way of salvation, having never exercised one act of love to God in his life, or done one thing for his glory; having then every lust and corruption in its full strength; having then such enmity in the heart against God, as to be ready to dethrone him, if that were possible; having no right in God, or interest in Christ; having the terrible wrath of God abiding on him; being yet the child of the devil, entirely in his possession and under his power; with no hope to maintain him, and with the full view of never-ending misery just at the door. What a dismal case must a natural man be in under such circumstances! How will his heart die within him at the news of his approaching death, when he finds that he must go, that he cannot deliver himself, that death stands with his grim countenance looking him in the face, and is just about to seize him, and carry him out of the world. And that he at the same time has nothing to depend on! How often are there

instances of dismal distress of unconverted persons on a deathbed! No one knows the fears, the exercise and torment in their hearts, but they who feel them. They are such that all the pleasures of sin, which they have had in their whole lives, will not pay them for. As you may sometimes see godly men go triumphing out of the world full of joy, with the foretastes of heaven, so sometimes wicked men, when dying, anticipate something of hell before they arrive there. The flames of hell do, as it were, come up and reach them, in some measure, before they are dead. God then withdraws, and ceases to protect them. The tormentor begins his work while they are alive. Thus it was with Saul and Judas; and there have been many other similar instances since; and none, who are in a natural condition, have any security from it. The state of a natural man is doleful on this account, though this is but a prelude and foretaste of the everlasting misery which follows.

Thus I have, in some measure, shown in what a doleful condition those are who are in a natural condition. Still I have said but little. It is beyond what we can speak or think. They who say most of the dreadfulness of a natural condition, say but little. And they who are most sensible, are sensible of but a small part of the misery of a natural state.

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The Final Judgment

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." -- **Acts 17:31**

INTRODUCTION

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

These words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Mars' hill, a place of concourse of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a common wealth by itself, and was the most noted place in the whole world for learning, philosophy, and human wisdom, And it continued so for many ages, till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminish. And Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in science, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was still very famous in the days of Christ and the apostles, and was a place of concourse for wise and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach concerning Jesus Christ, a man who had lately been crucified at Jerusalem (as in Acts 17:18), the philosophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to say. The strangeness of his doctrine excited their curiosity, for they spent their time in endeavoring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in Acts 17:21. They despised his doctrine in their hearts, and esteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apostle a babbler. For the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23, yet the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, two different sects, had a mind to hear what the babbler had to say.

Upon this Paul rises up in the midst of them, and makes a speech. And as

he speaks to philosophers and men of learning, he speaks quite differently from his common mode of address. There is evidently, in his discourse, a greater depth of thought, more philosophical reasoning, and a more elevated style, than are to be found in his ordinary discourses to common men. His speech is such as was likely to draw the attention and gain the assent of philosophers. He shows himself to be no babbler, but a man who could offer such reason, as they, however they valued themselves upon their wisdom, were not able to gainsay. His practice here is agreeable to what he saith of himself, 1 Cor. 9:22, "that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak, but to the wise he became as wise, that he might gain the wise.

In the first place, he reasons with them concerning their worship of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreasonable it is to suppose, that he delights in such superstitious worship. He begins with this, because they were most likely to hearken to it, as being so evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reason, and also agreeable to what some of their own poets and philosophers had said (Acts 17:28). He begins not immediately to tell them about Jesus Christ, his dying for sinners, and his resurrection from the dead. But first draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken. And then, having thus introduced himself, he proceeds to speak concerning Jesus Christ.

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at. He suffered the world to lie in heathenish darkness. But now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men should everywhere repent,* "because he had appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, the apostle brings in this, that God had appointed such a day of judgment. And as a proof of this he brings the resurrection Christ from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may observe,

That in them the apostle speaks of the general judgment: *He will judge*

the WORLD. — The time when this shall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day*. — How the world is to be judged: *In righteousness*. — The man by whom it is to be judged: *Christ Jesus whom God raised from the dead*.

DOCTRINE

There is a day coming in which there will be a general righteous judgment of the whole world by Jesus Christ.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall show, That God is the Supreme Judge of the world. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world. That the person by whom he will judge it is Jesus Christ. That the transactions of that day will be greatly interesting and truly awful. That all shall be done in righteousness. And finally, I shall take notice of those things which shall be immediately consequent upon the judgment.

SECTION I

God is the supreme judge of the world.

I. God is so by *right*. He is by right the supreme and absolute ruler and disposer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational understanding part of the creation is indeed subject to a different sort of government from that to which irrational creatures are subject. God governs the sun, moon, and stars. He governs even the motes of dust which fly in the air. Not a hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God also governs the brute creatures. By his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning those creatures. And rational creatures are subject to the same sort of government. All their actions, ***1*** and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees so that no event that relates to them ever happens without the disposal of God, according to his own decrees. The rule of this government is God's wise decree, and nothing else.

But rational creatures, because they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the subjects of another kind of government. They are so only with respect to those of their actions, in which they are *causes by counsel,* or with respect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now speak is called *moral* government, and consists in two things, in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with respect to this sort of government, by right the sovereign *ruler* of the world. He is possessed of this right by reason of his infinite greatness and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and solely fit for, the office of supreme ruler. He that is so excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the highest respect of the creature, has thereby a right to that respect. He deserves it by a merit of condignity, so that it is injustice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wise and true, and is only so regarded, has a right in everything to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God has also a right to the character of supreme ruler, by reason of the absolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures, and rational creatures no less than other, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good, so that they are properly his possession. And as, by virtue of this, he has a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleases, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wisdom. So the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives, that are expressive of it.

For the same reason, he has a right to *judge* their actions and conduct, and to fulfill the sanction of his law. He who has an absolute and independent right to give laws, has evermore the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a judge of reasonable creatures. And sanctions, or rewards and punishments, annexed to rules of conduct are necessary to the being of laws. A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws. However, these sanctions themselves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them. As God has a right to be judge, so has he a right to be the *supreme* judge. And none has a right to reverse his judgments, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him,

Why judgest thou thus?

II. God is, *in fact* the supreme judge of the world. He has power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he has a right which cannot be disputed, so he has power which cannot be controlled. He is possessed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world. And he does maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuse subjection to God as a lawgiver. They may shake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion. Yet they cannot withdraw themselves from his judgment. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they shall have him for their judge. The strongest of creatures can do nothing to control God, or to avoid him while acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgment-seat, and is also able to execute the sentence which he shall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by opposition of power entirely to shake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the most mighty of creatures. But they miserably failed in it. God notwithstanding acted as their judge in casting those proud spirits out of heaven, and binding them in chains of darkness unto a further judgment, and a further execution. "God is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job 9:4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever has acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments, he pleased on the children of men. And so he does still. He is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so be evermore will act.

God acts as judge towards the children of men more especially,

First, in man's particular judgment at death. Then the sentence is executed, and the reward bestowed *in part;* which is not done without a judgment. The soul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be disposed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need understand no more than this, that the soul is made immediately sensible of the presence of God, God manifesting himself immediately to the soul, with the glory and majesty

of a judge, that the sins of the wicked and the righteousness of the saints are brought by God to the view of their consciences, so that they know the reason of the sentence given, and their consciences are made to testify to the justice of it. And that thus the will of God for the fulfillment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

Second, in the great and general judgment, when all men shall together appear before the judgment-seat to be judged, and which judgment will be much more solemn, and the sanctions of the law will to a further degree be fulfilled. — But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

SECTION II

That there is a time coming when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world of mankind.

The doctrine of a general judgment is not sufficiently discoverable by the light of nature. Indeed some of the heathens had some obscure notions concerning a future judgment. But the light of nature, or mere unassisted reason, was not sufficient to instruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psa. 96:13, "The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth." And Ecc. 12:14, "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And in some other such like passages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greatest clearness revealed in the New Testament. There we have it frequently and particularly declared and described with its circumstances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the gospel, the brightest and most glorious revelation that God has given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reason, and of which reason gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the dissolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it shall

stand before God and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and just judgment, set all things to rights respecting their moral behavior, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason. Which I shall now endeavor to make appear. But I would premise that what we would inquire into is not whether all mankind shall be judged by God. For that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already spoken something of it. But whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgment of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following considerations.

I. Such a judgment will be a more glorious display of God's majesty and dominion. It will be more glorious because it will be more open, public, and solemn. — Although God now actually exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth, although he reigns and does all things according to his own will, ordering all events as seemeth to himself good, and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually disposing of men's souls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and secret manner, insomuch that it is common among the proud sons of men to refuse acknowledging his dominion. Wicked men question the very existence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it. And therefore they cast off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not suitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but seem to look upon themselves as supreme, and therefore tyrannize over mankind, as if they were in no wise accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheistical persons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind. And therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Israel, or to the God of Christians, but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their sovereign lords and supreme judges. Over how great a part of the world has Satan usurped the dominion, and set up himself for God, in opposition to the true God!

Now, how agreeable to reason is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the present state of mankind shall come to a conclusion, should in

the most open and public manner, manifest his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, together before him to be judged with respect to all that they ever did in the world! That he should thus openly discover his dominion in this world, where his authority has been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed! That however God be not now visibly present upon earth, disposing and judging in that visible manner that earthly kings do. Yet at the conclusion of the world he should make his dominion visible to all, and with respect to all mankind, so that every eye shall see him, and even they who have denied him shall find, that God is supreme Lord of them, and of the whole world!

II. The end of judgment will be more fully answered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private, judgment. The end for which there is any judgment at all is to display and glorify the righteousness of God; which end is more fully accomplished by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their state according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being present to behold, than if the same things should be done in a more private way. At the day of judgment there will be the most glorious display of the justice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards everyone. The justice of all his moral government will on that day be at once discovered. Then all objections will be removed. The conscience of every man shall be satisfied. The blasphemies of the ungodly will be forever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God forever: Rev. 19:1, 2, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power be to the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments.”

III. It is very agreeable to reason, that the irregularities which are so open and manifest in the world, should, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the supreme governor. The infinitely wise God, who made this world to be a habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and has appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government for the world, which he has thus made. He is not regardless how things proceed here on earth. It would be a reproach

to his wisdom, and to the perfect rectitude of his nature, to suppose so. This world is a world for confusion. It has been filled with irregularity and confusion ever since the fall. And the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular persons, but states, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all societies of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, so far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in the most irregular and confused manner.

Though justice sometimes takes place, yet how often do injustice, cruelty, and oppression prevail! How often are the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depressed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thousands of the best men have suffered intolerable cruelties, merely for their virtue and piety, and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to! The world is very much ruled by the pride, covetousness, and passions of men. Solomon takes much notice of such like irregularities in the present state (in his book of Ecclesiastes), hereby he shows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reasonable is it to suppose, that God, when he shall come and put an end to the present state of mankind, will in an open, public manner, the whole world being present, rectify all these disorders! And that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgment, in order that those who have been oppressed may be delivered; that the righteous cause may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedness, which has been approved, honored, and rewarded, may receive its due disgrace and punishment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompensed according to their desert! How agreeable is it to divine wisdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the supreme governor of the world!

IV. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honor which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honor them in the most public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and

before them that hated them. And it is most suitable that it should be so. It is suitable that those holy, humble souls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated and put to shame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, should be openly acquitted, commended, and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the punishment of the ungodly will be the open shame and disgrace which they shall suffer. Although many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world, have had a very high thought of themselves, and have obtained outward honor among men; yet God will put them to open shame, by showing all their wickedness and moral filthiness before the whole assembly of angels and men, by manifesting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul spirits, and by turning them away into the most loathsome, as well as most dreadful, pit of hell, to dwell there forever. — Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

SECTION III

The world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The person by whom God will judge the world is Jesus Christ, God-man. The second person in the Trinity, that same person of whom we read in our Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at last crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, will come to judge the world both in his divine and human nature, in the same human body that was crucified, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven. Acts 1:11, “This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.” It will be his human nature which will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then also be present. And it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature that Christ will see and judge.

Here naturally arises an inquiry, Why is Christ appointed to judge the

world rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? We cannot pretend to know all the reasons of the divine dispensations. God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But so much may we learn by divine revelation, as to discover marvelous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

I. That God seeth fit, that he who is in the *human nature,* should be the judge of those who are of the human nature. John 5:27, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses, in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old, in his discoveries of himself to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations he made of himself in the tabernacle and temple. When, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the church and the world by Christ. So he will also at the end *judge* the world by him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by one invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit, that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the day of judgment, should see their judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of the other persons of the Trinity had been appointed to be judge, there must have been some extraordinary outward appearance made on purpose to be a token of the divine presence, as it was of old, before Christ was incarnate. But now there is no necessity of that. Now one of the persons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, so that God by him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

II. Christ has this honor of being the judge of the world given him, as a *suitable reward* for his sufferings. This is a part of Christ's exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given him in reward for his humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption. And we are expressly told, it was given him in reward for his sufferings, Phil. 2:8-12, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also

hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God seeth meet, that he who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind, without form or comeliness, having his divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time, in his own proper majesty and glory, without a veil. To the end that those who saw him here at the first, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth. And that he who once tabernacled with men, and was despised and rejected of them, may have the honor of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state! John 5:21-24.

God seeth meet that he who was once arraigned before the judgment-seat of men, and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spitted upon, and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded, by having those very persons brought to his tribunal, that they may see him in glory, and be confounded. And that he may have the disposal of them for all eternity. As Christ said to the high priest while arraigned before him, Mat. 26:64, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

III. It is needful that Christ should be the judge of the world, in order that he may *finish* the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the redeemer of the world should be a *complete* redeemer; and that therefore he should have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law, and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation, but it consists in a great measure, and is actually fulfilled, in converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in

crowning them with honor and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this, in order to his finishing the work which he has begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence is part of their salvation. And therefore it was necessary that Christ should be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might *finish* his work (John 6:39, 40, chap. 5:25-31). The redemption of the bodies of the saints is part of the work of redemption; the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies (Rom. 8:23).

It is the will of God, that Christ himself should have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he suffered so much. Now, the end for which he suffered and died was the complete salvation of his people. And this shall be obtained at the last judgment, and not before. Therefore it was necessary that Christ be appointed judge, in order that he himself might fully accomplish the end for which he had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished his appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be bestowed upon them at the day of judgment.

IV. It was proper that he who is appointed king of the church should rule till he should have put all his enemies under his feet. In order to which, he must be the judge of his *enemies,* as well as of his people. One of the offices of Christ, as redeemer, is that of a king. He is appointed king of the church and head over all things to the church. And in order that his kingdom be complete, and design of his reign be accomplished, he must *conquer* all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24, 25, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” Now, when Christ shall have brought his enemies, who had denied, opposed, and rebelled against him, to his judgment-seat, and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final and complete *victory* over them, a victory which shall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he who at present reigns and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom, should have the honor of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

V. It is for the abundant *comfort of the saints* that Christ is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumstances, and all those events to which it has relation, is every way so contrived of God, as to give strong consolation to believers: for God designed the gospel for a glorious manifestation of his grace to them. And therefore everything in it is so ordered, as to manifest the most grace and mercy.

Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints, that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their judge. That the same person who spilled his blood for them has the determination of their state left with him, so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what he was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the last day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them.

VI. That Christ is appointed to be the judge of the world will be for the more abundant *conviction of the ungodly*. It will be for their conviction that they are judged and condemned by that very person whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved, who shed his blood to give them an *opportunity* to be saved, who was wont to offer his righteousness to them, when they were in their state of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be saved. How justly will they be condemned by him whose salvation they have rejected, whose blood they have despised, whose many calls they have refused, and whom they have pierced by their sins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they shall hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themselves, how often has this same person, who now passes sentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his messengers, to accept of him, and to give myself to him! How often has he knocked at the door of my heart! and had it not been for my own folly and obstinacy, how might I have had him for my *Savior,* who is now my incensed *Judge!*

SECTION IV

Christ's coming, the resurrection, the judgment prepared, the books opened, the sentence pronounced and executed.

I. CHRIST Jesus will, in a most magnificent manner, descend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apostle expresses it, *far above all heavens,* Eph. 4:10. And there he has been ever since his ascension, being there enthroned in glory, in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions, and Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heavenly hosts, in a most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty, he will come in the glory of the Father, Mat. 16:27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.."

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Christ will appear, as he shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious visible light will shine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his presence. How vast and innumerable will that host be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deserted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Christ's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. The apostle Peter long after spoke of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. 1:16, 17, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." And his appearance to St. Paul at his conversion, and to St. John, as related in Rev. 1:13 etc. were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the day of judgment will be vastly more so than either of these, as the occasion will be so much greater. We have

good reason to think, that our nature, in the present frail state, could not bear the appearance of the majesty in which he will then be seen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of some of the angels to men, as of the angel that appeared at Christ's sepulcher, after his resurrection, Mat. 28:3, "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The angels will doubtless all of them make as glorious an appearance at the of judgment, as ever any of them have made on former occasions. How glorious, then, will be the retinue of Christ, made up of so many thousands of such angels! And how much more glorious will Christ, the judge himself, appear, than those his attendants! Doubtless their God will appear immensely more glorious than they.

Christ will thus descend into our air, to such a distance from the surface of the earth, that everyone, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him, Rev. 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."

Christ will make this appearance suddenly, and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

II. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound, as a notification to all mankind to appear. At which mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised, and the living changed. 1 Cor. 15:52, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Mat. 24:31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Thes. 4:16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be some great and remarkable signal given for the rising of the dead, which it seems will be some mighty sound, caused by the angels of God, who shall attend on Christ.

Upon this all the dead shall rise from their graves. All, both small and great, who shall have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world, those who died before the flood, and those who were drowned in the

flood, all that have died since that time, and that shall die to the end of the world. There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth, and in the water, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the scattered particles of dead bodies. The earth shall give up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and scattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to ashes and smoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beasts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; however many have consumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have ascended in exhalations; yet the all-wise and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vast multitude some shall rise to life, and others to condemnation. John 5:28, 29, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies, and be re-united to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them. Rev. 20:13, "And death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them." They shall lift their eyes full of the utmost amazement and horror to see their awful Judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they shall be raised will be most filthy and loathsome, thus properly corresponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their souls.

The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and his angels: 1 Thes. 4:14, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They also shall be re-united to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative beauty, similar to that of Christ's glorious body. Phil. 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Their bodies shall

rise incorruptible, no more liable to pain or disease, and with an extraordinary vigor and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. 15:43, 44, “It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet, and with what joy will they lift their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! And it will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, “Behold, I show you a great mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” The bodies of the wicked then living will be changed into such hideous things, as shall be answerable to the loathsome souls that dwell in them, and such as shall be prepared to receive and administer eternal torments without dissolution. But the bodies of the righteous shall be changed into the same glorious and immortal form in which those that shall be raised will appear.

III. They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Mat. 25:31, 32, 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the judgment-seat. However they may try to hide themselves, and for this purpose creep into dens caves of the mountains, and cry to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Yet there shall not one escape. To the judge they must come, and stand on the left hand with devils. On the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Savior, come into his presence, and stand at his right hand.

Besides the one standing on the right hand and the other on the left, there seems to be this difference between them that when the dead in Christ

shall be raised, they will all be caught up into the air, where Christ shall be, and shall be there at his right hand during the judgment, never more to set their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked shall be left standing on the earth, there to abide the judgment. 1 Thes. 4:16, 17, "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

And what a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

IV. The next thing will be that the books shall be opened. Rev. 20:12, "I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God; and the books were opened." Which books seem to be these two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of Scripture. The former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth that they may be judged according to them, and those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

First, the works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance. Mal. 3:16, "A book of remembrance was written before him." However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins, and to forget them; yet God never forgets any of them. Neither does God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favored with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the

immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves. Mat. 12:36, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Rom 14:12, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity, and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth against them on that day. For the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Judge himself will have taken the guilt of their sins upon him. Therefore their sins will not stand against them in the book of God’s remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been canceled before that time. The account that will be found in God’s book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make himself a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works. Rev. 20:12, “And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works.” And verse 13, “And they were judged every man according to their works.” Though the righteous are justified by faith, and not by their works, yet they shall be judged *according to* their works. then works shall be brought forth as the evidence of their of their faith. Their faith on that great day shall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man shall have been bad, if his life shall appear to have been unchristian, that will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they shall be examined, prove good and of the right sort, he shall surely be justified. They will be declared as a sure evidence of his having believed in Jesus Christ, and of his being clothed with his righteousness.

But by works we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul. As for instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands. Mat. 12:37, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Nor are we to understand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but also the thoughts themselves, and all the inward workings of the heart.

Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart. Rev. 2:23, "I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment, but also omissions of duty, as is manifest by Mat. 25:42, etc. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," etc.

On that day secret and hidden *wickedness* will be brought to light. All the uncleanness, injustice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in secret, shall be manifest both to angels and men. Then it will be made to appear, how this and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious, covetous, malicious, or impious desires and wishes. And how others have harbored in their hearts enmity against God and his law; also impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them, and motives set before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The *good works* of the saints also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts, so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

Second, the book of Scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone. Their works will be compared with the Word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life, shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God has told us beforehand, what will be the rule of judgment. We are told in the Scriptures upon what terms we shall be justified, and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God has given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgment will be the law. The law ever has stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule of judgment, for those to whom the law was given. Mat. 5:18, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The law will so far be made the rule of judgment, that not one person at that day shall by any means be justified or condemned, in a way inconsistent with that which is

established by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them, that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the law. The righteous will be so far judged by the law, that although their sentence will not be the sentence of the law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the law, but such as it allows. For it will be by the righteousness of the law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning everyone, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he has a fulfillment of the law to show. As to the *righteous,* they will have fulfillment to show. They will have it to plead, that the judge himself has fulfilled the law for them. That he has both satisfied for their sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them. Rom. 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for the righteousness to every one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it shall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfillment of it to plead, the sentence of the law shall be pronounced upon them.

A *secondary* rule of judgment will be the gospel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is said, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:" Rom. 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." By the gospel, of covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. The sentence will be pronounced. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will these words of the judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them *depart.* He will send them away from his presence, will remove them forever far out of his sight, into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome, and unfit to dwell in his presence, and enjoy communion with him.

Christ will call them *cursed*. *Depart, ye cursed,* to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong, who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell, who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire*. He will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth and rubbish of the universe. But into a furnace of fire. That must be their dwelling-place, there they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is *everlasting* fire. There is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking, and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared for the devil and his angels*. This sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadfulness of that fire to which they shall be condemned, that it is the same that is prepared for the devils, those foul spirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the same as that of the devils, in many respects; particularly as they must burn in the fire forever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the judge. And we know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings, far more dreadful than were on mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath, will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned. How will all their faces look pale! How will death sit upon their countenances, when those words shall be heard! What dolorous cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth, will there then be!

But with the most benign aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, will Christ invite his saints on his right hand to glory; saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him;* to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him, and to partake with him. He will call

them *blessed,* blessed of *his Father,* blessed by him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely, GOD. *Inherit the kingdom.* They are not only invited to go with Christ, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him, to sit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honor and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. “Prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” This denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God, as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind, that God was pleased to set his love upon them, long before they had a being, even from eternity. That therefore God made heaven on purpose for them, and fitted it for their delight and happiness.

VI. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed, Mat. 25:46, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” When the words of the sentence shall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then that vast and innumerable throng of ungodly men shall go away, shall be driven away, shall be necessitated to go away with devils, and shall with dismal cries and shrieks be cast into the great furnace of fire prepared for the punishment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this furnace they must in both soul and body enter, never more to come out. Here they must spend eternal ages in wrestling with the most excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midst of the most dreadful flames, and under the most insupportable wrath.

On the other hand, the righteous shall ascend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Christ, his angels, and all that host which descended with him. They shall ascend in the most joyful and triumphant manner, and shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honor, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was, and which he died to procure for them; and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete, will present it before the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory, to dwell there with Christ, who shall feed them, and lead them to living

fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

SECTION V

All will be done in righteousness.

CHRIST will give to every man his due, according to most righteous rule. Those who shall be condemned, will be most justly condemned, will be condemned to that punishment which they shall most justly deserve, and the justice of God in condemning them will be made most evident. Now the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and especially in the degree of their punishment, is often blasphemously called in question. But it will be made clear and apparent to all. Their own consciences will tell them that the sentence is just, and all cavils will be put to silence.

So those that shall be justified, shall be most justly adjudged to eternal life. Although they also were great sinners, and deserved eternal death; yet it will not be against justice or the law, to justify them, they will be in Christ. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Christ's righteousness, Rom. 3:26, "That God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Christ will judge the world in righteousness, particularly as he will give to everyone a *due proportion* either of reward or punishment, according to the various characters of those who shall be judged. The punishments shall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the sins of the wicked. And the rewards of the righteous shall be duly proportioned to the number of their holy acts and affections, and also to the degree of virtue implied in them. — I would observe further,

I. That Christ cannot fail of being just in judging through *mistake*. He cannot take some to be sincere and godly, who are not so, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really sincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is justice in particular cases, as human

judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudices, as human judges are very liable to be. Deu. 10:17, “He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.” It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuse, and false colors, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impossible that he should err, in assigning to everyone his proper proportion of reward or punishment, according to his wickedness or good works. His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him against all these, and other such errors.

II. He cannot fail of judging righteously through an *unrighteous* disposition. For he is infinitely just and holy in his nature. Deu. 32:4, “He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.” It is not possible that an infinitely powerful, self-sufficient being should be under any temptation to injustice. Nor is it possible that an infinitely wise being, who knoweth all things, should not choose justice. For he who perfectly knows all things perfectly knows how much more amiable justice is than injustice. And therefore must choose it.

SECTION VI

Those things which will immediately follow the day of judgment.

I. AFTER the sentence shall have been pronounced, and the saints shall have ascended with Christ into glory, this world will be dissolved by fire. The conflagration will immediately succeed the judgment. When an end shall have been put to the present state of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that state, will be destroyed, there being no further use for it. This earth which had been the stage upon which so many scenes had been acted, upon which there had been so many great and famous kingdoms and large cities, where there had been so many wars, so much trade and business carried on for so many ages, shall then be destroyed. These continents, these islands, these seas and rivers, theses mountains and valleys, shall be seen no more at all. All shall be destroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the Word of God. 2 Pet. 3:7, “But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the

same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." Verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." 2 Pet. 3:12, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

II. Both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the saints will be increased beyond what shall be before the judgment. The misery of the wicked will be increased, as they will be tormented not only in their souls, but also in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and administer torment to their souls. There will doubtless then be the like connection between soul and body, as there is now. And therefore the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not suppose that their torments will be increased as well as those of the devils? Concerning them we are informed (Jam. 2:19) that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting no doubt that he will inflict upon them, in due time more severe torments than even those which they now suffer. We are also informed that they are bound "in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; *and* unto the judgment of the great day," (2 Pet. 2:4, and Jude 6) which implies that their full punishment is not yet executed upon them, but that they are now reserved as prisoners in hell, to receive their just recompense on the day of judgment. Hence it was that they thought Christ was *come to torment them before the time*. Mat. 8:29. Thus the punishment neither of wicked men nor devils will be complete before the final judgment.

No more will the happiness of the saints be complete before that time. Therefore we are in the New Testament so often encouraged with promises of the resurrection of the dead, and of the day when Christ shall come the second time. These things are spoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Christians. A state of separation of soul and body is to men an unnatural state Therefore when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dead, and their souls shall be again united to them, as their state will be more natural, so doubtless it will be more

happy. Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to administer as much to their happiness, as the bodies of the wicked will be to administer to their misery.

We may with good reason suppose the accession of happiness to the souls of the saints will be great, since the occasion is represented as the marriage of the church, and the Lamb. Rev. 19:7, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” Their joy will then be increased because they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Christ will then be perfect, the church will be complete. All the parts of it will have come into existence, which will not be the case before the end of the world. No parts of it will be under sin of affliction. All the members of it will be in a perfect state. And they shall all be together by themselves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride adorned for her husband, and therefore she will exceedingly rejoice.

Then also the Mediator will have fully accomplished his work. He will then have destroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Christ will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accomplished the design which was in his heart from all eternity. For these reasons Christ himself will greatly rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which he has been doing from the beginning of the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events. Then his marvelous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. These things will cause a great accession of happiness to the saints, who shall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himself, his Son, and his elect. Then he will see that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the same time the saints also, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large accession of happiness.

Then God will make more abundant manifestations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son. Then he will more plentifully pour out his Spirit, and make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, and by means of all these will so increase the happiness of the saints, as shall be suitable to the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and

to such a joyful occasion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happiness will the saints remain forever and ever.

SECTION VII

The uses to which this doctrine is applicable.

I. THE *first use* proper to be made of this doctrine is of *instruction*. Hence many of the mysteries of Divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them. As,

First, that God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in the world. The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world must necessarily hate wickedness. Yet we see many wicked men spreading themselves as a green bay-tree. They live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, who by their wickedness have been the pests of mankind. Many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honored as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should suffer it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment. And then the mystery is unraveled. For although God for the present keeps silence, and seems to let them alone; yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness. They shall then receive condign punishment. The saints under the Old Testament were much stumbled at these dispensations of Providence, as you may see in Job 21, and Psa. 73, and Jer. 12. The difficulty to them was so great, because then a future

state and a day of judgment were not revealed with that clearness with which they are now.

Second, God sometimes suffers some of the best of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The *wicked* rule, while *they* are subject. The wicked are the head, and they are the tail. The wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed, yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets. These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppressed by them, things are quite out of joint. Pro. 25:26, "A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." Sometimes one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thousands, of precious saints a sacrifice to his lust and cruelty, or to his enmity against virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reason but that for which they are especially to be esteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than the present state, these things appear strange and unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits. When God shall have put an end to the present state, these things shall all be brought to rights. Though God suffers things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course always. Comparatively speaking, the present state of things is *but for a moment*. When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honored, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall at last have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

Third, it is another mystery of providence, that God suffers so much public injustice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this state pass unsettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many suffer by men in public offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Now it seems a mystery that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world

is perfectly just. But at the final judgment all these wrongs shall be adjusted, as well as those of a more private nature.

II. Our *second use* of this subject shall be to apply it to the *awakening* of sinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to sin against him, consider seriously what you have heard concerning the day of judgment. Although these things be now future and unseen, yet they are real and certain. If you now be left to yourselves, if God keep silence, and judgment be not speedily executed, it is not because God is regardless how you live, and how you behave yourselves. Now indeed God is invisible to you, and his wrath is invisible. But at the day of judgment, you yourselves shall see him with your bodily eyes. You shall not then be able to keep out of his sight, or to avoid seeing him. Rev. 1:7, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." You shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Your ears shall hear the last trumpet, that dreadful sound, the voice of the archangel. Your eyes shall see your judge sitting on the throne, they shall see those manifestations of wrath which there will be in his countenance. Your ears shall hear him pronounce the sentence.

Seriously consider, if you live in the ways of sin, and appear at that day with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the sight or the hearing of these things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to seize you, when you shall see the judge descending, and hear the trump of God. What account will you be able to give, when it shall be inquired of you, why you led such a sinful, wicked life? What will you be able to say for yourselves, when it shall be asked, why you neglected such and such particular duties, as the duty of secret prayer, for instance? Or why you have habitually practiced such and such particular sins or lusts? Although you be so careless of your conduct and manner of life, make so light of sin, and proceed in it so freely, with little or no dread or remorse; yet you must give an account of every sin that you commit, of every idle word that you speak, and of every sinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of justice, of temperance, or of charity; every time you indulge any lust, whether secretly or openly, you must give an account of it. It will never be forgotten, it stands written in that book

which will be opened on that day.

Consider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding strict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to answer the demands of this law? — Consider also,

First, that the judge will be your *supreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his decision. This is often the case in this world. When we are dissatisfied with the decisions of a judge, we often may appeal to a higher, a more knowing, or a more just judicatory. But no such appeal can be made from our Divine Judge. No such indulgence will be allowed. Or if it were allowed, there is no superior judge to whom the appeal should be made. By his decision, therefore, you must abide.

Second, the judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourselves, however he might judge and determine, you might resist, and by the help of others, if not by your own strength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgment. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impossible. In vain is all resistance, either by yourselves, or by whatever help you can obtain. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished,” Pro. 11:21. As well might you “set the briers and thorns in battle against God,” Isa. 27:4.

Third, the judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverse their sentence, or at least to remit something of its severity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind. But then the day of grace will be past, and the door of mercy be shut. Then although ye spread forth your hands, yet the judge will hide his eyes from you. Yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear. Isa. 1:15. Then the judge will deal in fury. His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity. And though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you. Eze. 8:18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though you seek it carefully with tears.

Fourth, the judge at that day will not mix mercy with justice. The time for mercy to be shown to sinners will then be past. Christ will then appear in

another character than that of the merciful Savior. Having laid aside the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe himself with justice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of sinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement. He will exact the very uttermost farthing, Mat. 5:26. Then Christ will come to fulfill that in Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The punishment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity*. See Eze. 5:11, "Neither shall mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity." Here all judgments have a mixture of mercy. But the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I shall apply myself, *thirdly,* to several *different characters* of men.

First, to those who live in secret wickedness. Let such consider that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practice many things, you indulge many lusts, under the covert of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do in the light of the sun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundless. All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men. Luke 12:2, 3, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

Before human judges are brought only those things which are known. But before this judge shall be brought the most "hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. 4:5. All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them. Of these things, however secret, there will be need of no other evidence than the testimony of God and of your own consciences.

Second, to such as are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow-men. Consider, that all your dealings with men must be tried, must be brought forth into judgment, and there compared with the rules of the Word of God. All your actions must be judged according to those things which are found written in the book of the Word of God. If your ways of dealing with men shall not agree with those rules of righteousness, they will be condemned. Now, the Word of God directs us to practice entire justice. "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow," Deu. 16:20, and to do to others as we would they would do to us. But how many are there, whose dealings with their fellow-men, if strictly tried by these rules, would not stand the test!

God has, in his word, forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with another, Lev. 11:13. He has forbidden us to oppress one another, Lev. 25:14. But how frequent are practices contrary to those rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them! How common are fraud and trickishness in trade! How will men endeavor to lead on those with whom they trade in the dark, that so they may make their advantage! Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us. How common are such things as that mentioned, Pro. 20:14, "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

Many men will take the advantage of another's ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong. Yea, they seem not to scruple such practices. Beside downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means right in the sight of God, and will appear to be very unjust, when they shall be tried by the rule of God's Word at the day of judgment. And how common a thing is oppression or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the utmost possible of their neighbor for what they have to dispose of, and their neighbor needs!

Let such consider, that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and sees how they conduct themselves in their daily traffic with one another, and that he will try their works another day. Justice shall assuredly take place at last. The righteous Governor of the world will not suffer injustice without control. He will control and rectify it by returning the injury upon

the head of the injurer. Mat. 7:2, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

Third, to those who plead for the lawfulness of practices generally condemned by God’s people. You who do this, consider that your practices must be tried at the day of judgment. Consider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the most holy Judge at that day. Pro. 5:21, “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth all his goings.” However, by your carnal reasonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the judge, he will not hearken to your excuses, but will try your ways by the rule. He will know whether they be straight or crooked.

When you plead for these and those liberties which you take, let it be considered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the judge at the last great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?

Fourth, to those who are wont to excuse their wickedness. Will the excuses which you make for yourselves be accepted at the day of judgment? If you excuse yourselves to your own consciences, by saying that you were under such and such temptations which you could not withstand, that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it, that it would have been so and so to your damage if you had done otherwise, that if you had done such a duty, you would have brought yourselves into difficulty, would have incurred the displeasure of such and such friends, or would have been despised and laughed at. Or if you say, you did no more than it was the common custom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain persons of good reputation now practice, that if you had done otherwise, you would have been singular. If these be your excuses for the sins which you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me ask you, will they appear sufficient when they shall be examined at the day of judgment?

Fifth, to those who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are some persons who live in no open vice, and perhaps conscientiously avoid secret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief. They are indeed called upon *to repent and believe the gospel,* to forsake their evil

ways and *thoughts,* and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Christ, *laboring,* and *heavy-laden with sin,* that they may obtain *rest* of him; and are assured, that if they *believe, they shall be saved;* and that if they *believe not, they shall be damned;* and all the most powerful motives are set before them, to induce them to comply with these exhortations, especially those drawn from the eternal world. Yet they persist in sin, they remain impenitent and unhumbled. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life.

Now such men shall be brought into judgment for their conduct, as well as more gross sinners. Nor will they be any more able to stand in the judgment than the other. They resist the most powerful means of grace, go on in sin against the clear light of the gospel, refuse to hearken to the kindest calls and invitations, reject the most amiable Savior, the judge himself, and despise the free offers of eternal life, glory, and felicity. And how will they be able to answer for these things at the tribunal of Christ?

IV. If there be a day of judgment appointed, then let all be very strict in trying their own sincerity. God on that day will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that day will be like the fire, which burns up whatsoever is not true gold. Wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day. The judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be colored over. Mal. 3:2, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." And Mal. 4:1, "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are multitudes of men that wear the guise of saints, appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their neighbors, is good. They have sheep's clothing. But no disguise can hide them from the eyes of the judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire. They search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men. He will see whether they be sound at heart. He will see from what principles they have acted. A fair show will in no degree deceive him, as it does men in the present state. It will signify nothing to say, "Lord, we have eaten

and drunk in thy presence; and in thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works." It will signify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unless you have some greater evidences of sincerity.

Wherefore let everyone take heed that he be not deceived concerning himself. And that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgment. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgment of men, the judgment of godly men, or that of ministers, in your favor. Consider that they are not to be your judges at last. Take occasion frequently to compare your hearts with the Word of God. That is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged. And try yourselves by your works, by which also you must be tried at last. Inquire whether you lead holy Christian lives, whether you perform universal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious respect to God.

Also frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would search you, try you now, and discover you to yourselves, that you may see if you be insincere in religion. And that he would lead you in the way everlasting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unsettle you, and fix you upon the sure foundation. The example of the psalmist in this is worthy of imitation. Psa. 26:1, 2, "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove me; try my reins and mine heart." And Psa. 139:23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God will search us hereafter, and discover what we are, both to ourselves and to all the world. Let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If God has appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourselves for our sins. This we must do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would escape condemnation, we must see that we justly may be condemned. We must be so sensible of our vileness and guilt, as to see that we deserve all that condemnation and punishment which are threatened. And that we are in

the hands of God, who is the sovereign disposer of us, and will do with us as seemeth to himself good. Let us therefore often reflect on our sins, confess them before God, condemn and abhor ourselves, be truly humbled, and repent in dust and ashes.

VI. If these things be so, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts both in general and upon particular occasions, to determine as to the principles, motives, and ends of their actions. But this is to assume the province of God, and to set up ourselves as lords and judges. Rom. 14:4, "Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant?" Jam. 4:11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus disposed to judge and act censoriously towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourselves. Mat. 7:1, 2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great consolation to the godly. This day of judgment, which is so terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and satisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than most wicked men, yet on that day you shall be delivered from all afflictions, and from all trouble. If you be unjustly treated by wicked men, and abused by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteously. The psalmist used often to comfort himself with this.

Upon these accounts the saints have reason to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing." This is to the saints a blessed hope. Tit. 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This day may well be the object of their eager desire, and when they hear of Christ's coming to judgment, they may well say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus," Rev. 22:20. It will be the most glorious day that ever the saints saw. It will be so both to those who shall die, and whose souls shall go to heaven, and to those who shall then be found alive on earth. It will be the

wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the consideration of the approach of this day, there is ground of great consolation to the saints.

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Wicked Men Inconsistent with Themselves

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented..." -- **Matthew 11:16-19.**

Subject: Wicked men are inconsistent with themselves.

The occasion of this discourse was John's sending to Christ two of his disciples, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" When the messengers had gone back, Christ enters into a discourse with the multitude concerning John, of which the verses read are a part, in which Christ reproves the unreasonableness of the Jews in rejecting God's messengers. We may observe in the words the following things:

I. The messengers of God that are here instanced in that they had been rejected, *viz.* John the Baptist and Christ. The former is spoken of in the context as being on some accounts the greatest of all the prophets that ever came before Christ, as you may see, verses 9-11, "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The latter, even Christ, was the great prophet of God, the Head and Lord of the prophets, God's only-begotten Son.

II. In what the unreasonableness of their rejecting these messengers of

God appears, *viz.* in their inconsistency with themselves in those objections which they made against them. And here we may observe,

First, the nature of their objections against these two messengers of God. They objected against their manner of living with respect to their meat and drink.

Second, the different manner of living of those two messengers of God. Christ came eating and drinking, but John came neither eating nor drinking, *i.e.* John lived on a very coarse and spare diet, as we read, Mat.3:4, "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." He carefully abstained from that free use of pleasant meats and drinks that others allowed themselves in. But Christ came eating and drinking, i.e. freely using the comforts and enjoyments of life, taking indifferently all kinds of food or drink that were wholesome, comfortable, and lawful. This diverse manner of living of John the Baptist and Christ was agreeable to the diverse errands that they came upon. John's errand was to call men to repentance, to awaken them to a sense of their sin and misery, to bring them to mourn for their sins, and humble themselves before God for them, that they might be prepared for the comforts and blessings of the kingdom of heaven that were to be introduced by Jesus Christ. A life of abstinence from the pleasant things of this world was agreeable to the purpose of awakening the soul and of leading it to mourning and humiliation for sin, which it was especially John's business to preach and set an example of.

But after John had thus prepared the way with awakenings and repentance, then Christ came to administer comfort to those that were thus prepared for it, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort those that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Isa. 61:1-3. And freely eating and drinking, and enjoying the comforts and pleasant things of life, [were] agreeable to such an errand as

this, and therefore Christ, in his first beginning of his public ministry which succeeded John's, declares this to be the business he was come upon. Luke 4:16-19, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Third, their unreasonableness appears in the fact that though the way of living of these two persons was in this respect so diverse, yet they objected against both. John came neither eating nor drinking. And for that they objected against him, and reviled him, as though he was one that was very odd and strange, and beside himself, and under the influence of a diabolical spirit. This objection seemed to manifest a dislike of such a way of living, as though it was their opinion that a man ought not to live thus abstemiously, but should eat and drink freely as other people did. But yet when Christ came and did that, then they objected against that too, and bitterly reproached him for that, and called him a glutton, and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. So that there was no escaping their reproaches. If a man of God lived a life of trial and abstinence, they spoke of it as matter of great reproach, and yet if he did not so, they made that a matter of no less reproach. It was a crime with them for a prophet to eat and drink, and it was also a crime to let it alone. So inconsistent were they with themselves that there was not such thing as a prophet's suiting them. They condemned the doing of that which at the same time they condemned the not doing of, and both they condemned with great bitterness, and virulent and contemptuous reproaches. This plainly showed that their objections against John the Baptist and Christ were but vain pretenses, and that the true reason why they disliked them was not the manner of living of either of them with respect to eating and drinking, but because they hated their persons and the business they came upon. When men have a prejudice against other persons they will be ready to find fault with everything in them, they will

find out bad names for their virtues, and will reproach those things in them which they will approve of and commend in others to whose persons they have a liking.

III. The thing to which Christ compares their inconsistency with themselves, to wit, to children who meet their companions in the streets or market-places, and endeavor to aid them in their play, in things of a diverse and contrary nature. For it they pipe unto them with notes manifesting cheerfulness and mirth, that does not suit them. They refuse to fall in with this, as though they did not like such cheerfulness, and as though mourning would suit them better. And then, when they see that they took a contrary course, they mourned with them, but yet neither do they fall in with that, they do not lament with the. So that they comfort them in nothing, neither mirth nor mourning.

So John the Baptist preaching repentance came with tokens of sorrow and mourning, and mean apparel, with a garment of camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, and with great abstinence. But Christ when he comes, comes eating and drinking with tokens of comfort and joy. But neither of them suited them. From the text thus explained we shall derive the following.

Doctrine. Wicked men are very inconsistent with themselves. They are so in the following respects:

I. The dictates of their darkened understandings are inconsistent with themselves.

II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason.

III. Their wills are inconsistent with themselves.

IV. Their outward show is inconsistent with their hearts.

V. Their profession is inconsistent with their practice.

VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hopes.

VII. Their practice is inconsistent with itself.

I. Their understandings are inconsistent with themselves. I do not mean that the faculty of reason and understanding is inconsistent with itself. For the faculty of understanding with which God has endowed man is wholly good and right. It is that wherein the natural image of God consists, and is the excellency of man's nature. And if the faculty of reason be duly improved, it will lead men right. Light is never inconsistent with itself. But the understandings of natural men are perverted and blinded by sin, and are inconsistent with themselves in two ways:

First, their practical judgment is inconsistent with their own reason. By their practical judgment, I mean that judgment which they make of things that prevail, so as to determine their actions and govern their practice. This in wicked men is in innumerable things contrary to their own reason. For, in forming their judgment of things by which they govern themselves, they do not inquire at the mouth of reason, but at the mouth of their inclinations. Their lusts have a far greater hand in the judgments that they make of things, and by which they govern themselves, than their reason. As for instance, their practical judgment is that the things of this fading world, the enjoyments of this short life, are things of greater importance than the things of the eternal world; and yet if they inquire at the mouth of their own reason, that tells them the contrary. Their reason tells them that it is most plain and evident that eternal things, things that are to last forever, are of vastly greater importance than the things of time.

So their reason tells them that it must needs be the part of wisdom and prudence to improve the present time with the utmost diligence and earnestness, and to make ready for death. And yet they are not convinced of it, but their governing opinion is, that it is best to neglect the business of religion for the present, and to enjoy their ease, and sloth, and lusts awhile longer.

Their reason tells them, that it is well worth the while for every man to deny himself outward pleasure for the good of his soul. But their governing opinion or judgment is contrary, *viz.* that it is not best. and

that pleasures and the gratification of their lusts are worth more than any benefit they would obtain by seeking their salvation.

The reason of young people tells them that it is their true wisdom to improve the time of youth. Reason tells them that life is very uncertain. But when such persons hear ministers preach concerning the infinite importance of eternal things. the uncertainty of life, the peace and comfort that will be found in a state of happier existence with God, are told how light a thing the difficulty and sufferings of a holy life are in comparison, their reason assents to all this, but their practical judgments are the contrary. When a person has lately died, either in extreme terror and amazement, under a sense of the guilt of a mispent life, or full of joy and comfort, in consequence of a life of holy walking with God, their reason tells them that it would be well worth their while to labor and deny themselves all their lifetime to be ready for death, and to have a solid foundation of peace and comfort laid up against such an hour. But yet their practice is directly the reverse.

Second, some of their judgments of things are inconsistent with others. For instance, in temporal things, they judge that the good which is of long continuance is to be preferred before that which is of short continuance, and that a long-continued calamity is more to be dreaded and avoided than a short one. Their governing judgment is thus in these things, but yet it is the reverse in spiritual things.

Again, such arguments as they judge to furnish good and clear evidence with them in those things that are agreeable to their sinful inclination, they think not to have any evidence in those things that are contrary to them. In temporal things they think it to be their wisdom to improve times of special advantage, and to watch against that which might ensnare them, or endanger their welfare, but in other things they think the reverse. In these things, and many more that might be mentioned, their judgments are inconsistent with themselves.

II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason. This inconsistency is a consequence of the foregoing. For if their practical judgment be contrary to their own reason, it will follow that their wills are contrary to their reason. For the will ever follows the dictate of the practical judgment.

Their wills are contrary to their reason in two respects.

First, they will those things which their reason tells them are inconsistent with their duty. And so they are inconsistent with themselves, as their wills are inconsistent with their consciences. Conscience is a principle implanted in the heart of every man, and is as essential to his nature as the faculty of reason, for it is a natural and necessary attendant of that faculty. But the wills of wicked men are contrary to it, and inconsistent with it. They choose those things which they know to be evil, and ought not to be chosen. They choose that which their own reason tells them is unreasonable and vile, and unbecoming men, and justly provoking to their Maker, and contrary to the end for which they are made.

Hence arises an inward war in their own minds. Their wills and their consciences warring one against another. There is no true peace in their hearts, for they are at war with themselves, and therefore they are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, unless by a course of horrible violations of the dictates of their own conscience, they have proceeded so far in their war against their own consciences as to stupefy conscience, and lay it as it were dead, which is the case of some persons.

Second, they will those things which their reason tells them are contrary to their own interest, yea, those things which their own reason tells them are the way to their ruin and misery. At the very same time that wicked men are tempted to commit some sin, and their reason then tells them that it will expose them to the eternal wrath of God, and that it will therefore be a dreadful folly for them to do it, yet they will do it. Or when their reason tells them that the course in which they are going leads to destruction, and represents to them that it is the greatest folly, yet they will go on in it, and run the venture of being everlastingly undone.

So inconsistent are they with themselves, that they do and allow that of which they hope to repent, they choose that now for choosing which at the same time they expect and hope hereafter to charge themselves with great folly, and to be convinced that it is folly, and to lament and bewail it. Nay, they would not do it if they did not expect hereafter to see that it is very foolish in them so to do, and heartily to mourn for it.

In this respect they are so inconsistent with themselves that they are their own worst enemies. They are inconsistent with themselves, as two mortal enemies cannot consist together, or walk together. By choosing those things which their own reason tells them is contrary to their own interest, and tends to their own undoing, they may be said to hate their own souls, and to love their own ruin. Pro. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death."

III. Their wills and dispositions are inconsistent with their wills. The Jews would neither have a prophet to come eating and drinking, nor would they have him otherwise. They knew not what they would have themselves, there was no pleasing them. To eat and drink did not please them; that they reproached as drunkenness, and gluttony. Nor did it please them any more not to eat nor drink. This they reproached no less virulently, as though it were an argument that a man was out of his wits, and possessed by the devil. The inconsistency of wicked men's wills with themselves appears in the following things:

First, they do, in some respects, choose and refuse the same things.

I shall mention some instances.

1. In some respects, many of them wish to be converted from sin to God. They think that they should be ready to give almost all that they have in the world to be converted, and they pray to God to convert them, and seek for conversion, and take advice to that end, and use a great deal of labor for it. But yet if it be considered what conversion is, or what is meant by conversion, *viz.* the being turned from all their sins to God. They have no desire to be converted, they will not have conversion when it is offered them, when it comes to them they are not willing to be saved from sin, for they are not willing to part with their sins. When they think of the thing in the general, they wish that they were turned from sin. But when it comes to particulars, they cannot comply with it, they love their sins too well. When a particular lust comes and pleads to be indulged and gratified, then in this instance they have no wish to be converted, they are not willing to be turned from their sin altogether, they cannot bear entirely and forever to renounce and reject it. They have a wish to be converted, but not from enjoying their right hands, and right eyes. They

pray that they may be thoroughly and savingly converted, and seem to wish and pray for it. But yet when it comes to them, they are not willing for any more than a partial conversion. They cannot comply with a thorough conversion, for a thorough conversion is a turning from every one of their sins. And that proves that they would be willing to be converted from their sins for a little while, but to part with them finally is what they cannot find it in their hearts to comply with.

2. Some wicked men do in certain respects desire that a work of humiliation may be wrought in them, and yet are utterly opposed to humiliation. They do many things that they may be humbled, and pray that they may be brought off from their own righteousness, and yet would by no means let it go, but are indeed building up their own righteousness all the time.

They seem in some respects to wish that they might submit to the justice and sovereignty of God in their condemnation, but yet are utterly averse to any such thing as owning God's justice. They are averse to this submission, as appears from their showing such a sprit of strife with God. They do not believe that God is just and sovereign, and how therefore is it possible that they should desire really to submit to God's justice and sovereignty? They cannot heartily and fervently desire to submit to God as just and sovereign, when they do not believe that he possesses those attributes, but think him unjust and tyrannical.

3. They in some respects wish that they might come to Christ, but indeed are utterly averse to come to him, so that their will is in this also inconsistent with itself. They pray that they may come to Christ, they are ready to say that they would give all the world for an interest in Christ; and yet they will not have an interest in him, for that is what is offered them, and what Christ is continually inviting and urging them to accept, but they refuse it. It is true they like some things in Christ, they like salvation from the pains of hell, they like that safety from everlasting misery which they hear is to be had in him. But there are other things in him which they do not like, his holiness, his salvation from sin, his kingly office, and therefore they will not accept him as he is. If they could have a part of Christ without the rest they would, but they will not accept of the whole of Christ. Indeed they are not willing to come to Christ and

cordially accept of him as a Savior from hell, for they do not see that he is sufficient to save. And besides, they are not convinced that they have deserved it. There is no such thing as being cordially willing to accept of a Savior, who offered to deliver us from an unjust and undeserved punishment. For the hearty accepting of him as a Savior from the punishment would be allowing the punishment to be just. And God's offering a Savior from undeserved punishment is an imposition upon them. A man therefore can never heartily and sincerely accept such an offer. At the same time that natural men seem to wish, and pray, and strive to come to Christ, they are in their hearts bitter enemies to him. And there is no such thing as a sincere willingness to accept of one towards whom at the same time we are bitter enemies.

4. Natural men in some respects are desirous to go to heaven, and yet are averse to heaven. They are full of designs as to what they will do hereafter that they may go to heaven, but yet have no inclination to that wherein heaven really consists. The employments of heaven, which consist altogether in holy acts and holy contemplation, in holy exercises and holy praises, are that for which they have no desires nor inclination. And for the happiness of heaven they have no relish, but on the contrary, a dislike and an aversion. For the happiness of heaven consists in holy communion with God and Christ, to which their natures are opposite. Nor have they any desire for the company of heaven. And when it is observed what heaven really is, they choose this world before heaven.

5. They wish to have salvation from misery, but yet are averse to those things wherein salvation consists. And at the same time that they pray to Christ to serve them, they undo themselves as fast as they can. They spend their time daily in working out their own ruin. They pray that they may be delivered from hell, and yet are all the while piling up fuel and kindling and blowing the fire. Thus their wills are inconsistent with themselves, as they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things.

Second, they dislike and refuse spiritual things as they are, and yet refuse to have them otherwise. This was the very case with the Jews in the text, they would not have a prophet come eating and drinking. If he did so, they looked on him very reproachfully. Nor yet would they have him not

come eating and drinking, for if he did so they called him a mad man, and possessed with a devil, which is a lively specimen of the inconsistency of wicked men, of which we are speaking.

I will mention several instances of this inconsistency on the part of wicked men.

1. They do not like God as he is, and yet they would not like him if he were otherwise. They would not like him if he were otherwise than he is in those very things for which they most dislike him.

(1.) They dislike God because he is a holy God. This is the main foundation of the enmity that wicked men have against God. His perfect purity and holiness make them enemies to him, because from this perfection of his nature he necessarily hates sin, and so hates their sins, which they love, and he will not and cannot allow of any sin in them. They are utter enemies to such a holy God. And yet they would not like him if they supposed him to be an unholy being, or if they supposed him to be at all wanting in perfect holiness, for then he could not be depended upon. If he were unholy, they know that if he promised them anything they could have no certain dependence upon it, for an unholy being is liable to break his promises. If he were unholy they could have no dependence on his faithfulness, and therefore they would never be willing to give up themselves to him as their God, for they would not know how he would dispose of them, what he would do with them. If he were to obligate himself by covenant, yet they could have no dependence upon it; and therefore they would by no means accept of such a God to be their God, to rule over them, and dispose of them.

(2.) They do not like God, because he is a God of justice. This indeed is a branch of his holiness, for being strictly and perfectly just, he is disposed to execute just punishment on all iniquity. Therefore they are exceeding enemies to him, for they are the persons who are obnoxious, being those that have committed iniquity, and exposed themselves to just punishment. And yet they would not like God if he were an unjust God. If he were an unjust being, that would be an insuperable objection with them against accepting him as their God, for then they would think with themselves, "how do I know how unjustly he may deal with me.” And

wicked men, however unjust they are, never like injustice against themselves. And they never would be persuaded to accept of such a God as their Lord and King, for they should then expect to be wronged and abused by him. They would dread committing themselves into the hands of a God that is infinite in power, and can do what he will with them, and has no principle of holiness or justice to keep him from using that power in the most unjust and abusive manner towards them.

Though they are enemies to God because of his justice, yet whenever at any time they think God deals unjustly, they quarrel with him for it. How frequent is it for natural men, when there are any of God's methods of providence, the justice of which they cannot see through, to have their hearts swell with enmity, and to be full of blasphemous, malignant thoughts against God, if they do no even manifest it outwardly by a fretful, discontented behavior, and murmuring speeches?

(3.) They do not like God because he is an Almighty God and is able to destroy them when he pleases. Nor yet would they like him if he were a weak being and of but little power. They would on this account refuse to close with him as their God, for they would have a God able to do great things for them. They wish to have many things done for them, and they would have a God that can do them.

(4.) They do not like God because he is an omniscient God, for hereby he sees all their wickedness. But yet neither would they like him if he did not know all things, for then in many cases he would not know what their case is, and what it requires, and what is best for them. He might ruin them in the disposal of them through mistake, he might not know how to extricate them out of difficulties in which they are or may be involved.

(5.) Natural men oftentimes dislike God in the exercises of his infinite sovereign mercy, when it is exercised towards others. They are greatly displeased at God's being so gracious to others. They dislike it much that God bestows converting grace upon them and pardoning mercy, and a title to eternal life upon them. When they hear of their conversion it is unpleasant news, and they find fault with it the more when the persons who seem to have received such mercy are very unworthy, and have been very great sinners. They think of the sins of which they have been guilty,

and reckon up all the instances of wickedness they can think of, so that the mercy exercised towards them is the more displeasing because it appears so great in being bestowed on one so unworthy, like the elder brother, Luke 15:30, “But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.” And yet they would not like God if he were not infinitely merciful, for then they would have less hopes of obtaining mercy themselves. They are angry because God appears so merciful in the exercises of his grace to others. But yet they should have God merciful, and are at the same time afraid that he is not merciful enough to be willing to pardon their sins, and bestow his blessing on them. Thus natural men do not like God as he is, nor yet would they like him if he were otherwise.

2. They do not like men that are holy, nor yet do they like men that are wicked. They do not like holy men, for they know that such do not approve of that which themselves love, and the lives of the godly are a condemnation of the wickedness of their own hearts and lives. Hence there is an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Gen. 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.” But although they do not like men if they are godly, so neither do they like them if they are ungodly. They are more forward than the godly are to reprove others for their vice and wickedness, and bitterly to reflect on others for their pride, their covetousness, and their idleness. None are more apt to find fault with wickedness in others than those who are wicked themselves, and one great reason is that other men’s lusts clash with theirs. Thus one man’s pride crosses the pride of another, for it is the nature of pride to desire to be alone in advancement, to make the person in whom it is affect to be a God, to appropriate all power and all honor to himself as his own prerogative. But such an aim in one man clashes with such an aim in another. Hence there are none that can bear pride in others so ill, as those that are very proud themselves, and there never are such strife and enmity as between proud, haughty men. Proud men love to have others walk humbly before them, and nothing enrages them so much as to have others carry themselves proudly. For the same reason covetous men dislike covetous men, for this lust clashes with the same lust in another. Every covetous man strives to get all into his own

hands, to get and keep all that he can to himself from his neighbor. So the lusts of envy, and malice, and revenge, are hated in others by envious and malicious men; because none are so obnoxious to malice, and envy, and revenge, as those that have the most of these qualities. Hence the wicked world on earth, who are at enmity with the church of God for its holiness, do not at all agree together. Though they agree in being alike under the power of wickedness, yet how full is the world of wicked men of strife and contention, of perpetual jars, animosities, and confusion! Rom. 1:29, 30, 31, 32, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." So Tit. 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And hence also it comes to pass that devils and wicked men in hell, though they hate angels and saints in heaven for their holiness, have yet no love one to another. Though they all agree in being perfectly wicked, yet they hate one another with implacable hatred, and are continually mortifying and tormenting one another so that hell is a world of perfect malice and contention.

3. They refuse to accept of heaven as it is. Yet they would not like it if it were otherwise. As has been observed before, they have no relish for the holy enjoyments and employments of heaven. They dislike heaven for its holiness, and yet they would not like it if it were unholy. For then they would be liable to the same troubles and vexations in heaven that they meet with in this world. If it were not that heaven differs from this world in holiness, it would be as full of pride and malice, envy, revenge, contention, injustice, violence, and cruelty, as this world is, and so would be as vexatious a world as this is. Wicked men are as liable to the trouble and vexation of the world, which arise from those things, as godly men, and in some respects more so, for they have no divine supports against those things, no safer portion to which their hearts betake themselves.

Third, the things that wicked men choose, imply an inconsistency in their own nature. The things which they would have are impossibilities and self-contradictions.

1. They would have a sufficient Savior, and not a holy one. They would not have a holy Savior, because such a Savior does not at all agree with their lusts. But yet they would have a sufficient Savior, one that is sufficient to save them from hell, and so one that is sufficient to make a proper atonement for all their sins, to make full satisfaction to the justice of God, that they may escape the penalty of that justice. But these things prove a great inconsistency, for how is it possible that a Savior, who is not perfectly holy himself, should make satisfaction for the unholiness of others? How is it possible that one who deserves to suffer the eternal wrath of God himself for his own sin, should by his sufferings appease God's wrath for the sin of others?

They would have a worthy Savior, as appears in this; when they are awakened, and in some measure sensible of their guilt, they dare not come to Christ, because they cannot see that he has worthiness enough to commend them to God. They are afraid that he is not worthy enough. And yet they dislike Christ because he is a holy Savior! And what an inconsistency is this! How can he be a worthy Savior, and not a holy one? So that their choice does in effect contain this inconsistency in it, that they would have a Savior who is infinitely worthy, without worthiness.

2. They wish for salvation from misery without salvation from sin. They do not love misery any better than others, and hope to be saved from it. And some of them are in distress for fear of misery. But yet they would have it without being parted from their sins, which is in its own nature impossible, for the creature that is sinful, must be miserable. For misery consists in separation from the fountain of happiness, and an enmity between the creature and the chief good. But sin implies in its own nature such a separation. It is a separation from that God who is the fountain of good, and is enmity against him, and therefore necessarily brings enmity from that being against the sinner, if it be continued. Sin is the seed of misery. Misery is the necessary fruit of it. It is necessary from the nature of God, who, being infinitely holy, necessarily hates it, and so necessarily arrays himself against that being who remains under the pollution and

guilt of it. And it is necessary from the nature of man, and the nature of sin. Misery is the natural fruit of sin, as the bud and blossom are the natural fruit of that on which they grow, and is so spoken of, Eze. 7:9, 10, "And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. Behold the day, behold it is come; the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed; pride hath budded."

Natural men would be freed from hell without being saved from sin, which is an inconsistency and impossibility. For where sin remains the reigning power, it will necessarily kindle up the flames of hell, and will bring on the torments of hell. Indeed, while men remain in the body, in the midst of the carnal objects of this world to engross the mind, to please the carnal appetites, to stupefy the conscience, and lull the soul asleep, they may avoid the torments of hell for a little while. But when the body comes to be dissolved, and all worldly objects, diversions, and entertainments come to an end, and the polluted and guilty soul comes to be stripped and turned out naked, infernal horror and misery will naturally and necessarily arise in such a soul. So that there is no such thing as being saved from hell, without being saved from sin.

3. They desire happiness without holiness. Wicked men have as earnest a desire of happiness as others. They are restlessly saying, "Who will show us any good?" And yet they are enemies to holiness. Here also they are inconsistent with themselves, for there is no such thing as happiness without holiness. The happiness of the creature consists in holiness. It is as great an inconsistency to suppose that a creature should be happy without being holy, as that a man should enjoy all the strength, and ease, and activity, and other comforts of health, in sore sickness; or that the notes of a tune should be harmonious that are disproportionate and discordant. So that they would be happy, and yet would not be happy. The thing they choose contains as great an inconsistency as if they should choose light or brightness, consisting in the blackness of darkness.

Fourth, in things that do most nearly concern them, they will neither choose nor refuse. The things of religion are things that concern them in the highest degree. It is no matter of indifference to them, whether they

will betake themselves in good earnest to the business of religion or not, whether they will obtain heaven, or be content with a portion in this life. But yet many natural men seem to remain in suspense about these things all the days of their lives. They are always at a loss, always halting between two opinions, which Elijah reproves, 1 Kin. 18:21, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." No wonder that they had nothing to answer, for their unreasonableness and inconsistency too manifestly appeared in it. Many, who hear of these subjects from their infancy, never come to a thorough conclusion in their own minds, whether they will continue to go on in the way to hell, or whether they will do what must be done to escape it. They neither resolve that they will forsake all their sins, nor yet that they will retain them. They do not determine to hearken to the warnings and counsels given to them, nor yet do they fully reject them. They have life and death set before them, one or the other, but they never come to a determination which they will choose.

Fifth, in pursuing the objects which they desire, their lusts are inconsistent with each other. It has before been shown that the lusts of one wicked man clash with those of another. But not only is it thus. Some of the lusts of the same person disagree with other lusts of his. Often, wicked men's covetousness clashes with their pride. Their pride prompts them to many things that their covetousness forbids. It would be agreeable to men's pride to make a splendid show in their houses and apparel, and manner of living, who yet are not willing, through their covetousness, to be at the cost of it. So their covetousness often thwarts their sensuality. Their sensual disposition inclines them to feast their appetites, but their covetousness will not allow it.

Sometimes men's sloth and idleness clash with their other lusts, with their pride, their covetousness, and sensuality. These lusts draw them one way to obtain much of the world, in order to pamper and gratify them. But their slothfulness draws another, or rather holds them and binds their hands from obtaining these things.

IV. The outward show of wicked men disagrees with their hearts. They very often make an appearance that is exceedingly different and contrary

to what they really are inwardly. They have the clothing of sheep, but the nature of wolves, Mat. 7:15. They are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. They make a show as though they believed the truth of the gospel, and believed that God was an infinitely great and an infinitely excellent being. They make a show of great respect to God, a show of reverence and love, when indeed they have no such thing in their hearts, but the contrary. The outward show they make, which is at war with their hearts, consists either in their words, or in their behavior.

The show they make in words is inconsistent with their hearts. Many of them profess to believe that God is an infinitely excellent being, when indeed they think that the meanest of their carnal enjoyments is more excellent than he. They profess to believe that there is another world, a heaven and a hell, when indeed they realize no such thing. They profess to believe that Christ is the only Savior, and that they can be saved in no other. And yet they all the while believe in their hearts that there are other saviors, and particularly that they can be saviors for themselves by their own strength and righteousness.

They do abominably dissemble in the profession they make of the favor of God, and of love to him, and willingness to obey him, and desire to glorify him. They have not a jot of these things in their hearts, but are all the while wholly under the influence of vile carnal principles in all that they do, and are only aiming at selfish ends and serving their lusts in all.

So did those Jews dissemble that came to Jeremiah and desired him to inquire of the Lord. Jer. 42:20, "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it." So did the Jews of whom we read in the test dissemble. They pretended to be enemies of gluttony, and drunkenness, and to dislike any such thing as associating with sinners. And so made a pretense of zeal against wickedness, in their opposition to Christ; when indeed they were actuated by a love to wickedness, and were enemies to Christ, for the sake of his holiness. So they pretended to be influenced by enmity against the devil in their opposition to John the Baptist, who they pretended had a devil; when indeed it was not enmity against the devil,

but against God. Many pretend a great deal of love to God in what they do, when it is only love to the world at bottom. Eze. 33:31, “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.”

The show which they make in their prayers is quite inconsistent with their hearts. Their very approach to God in this duty has a show of religion in it without the reality. And those things they say in their prayers are hypocritical dissembling pretenses. They profess honor, reverence, trust, humility, a sense of unworthiness, repentance towards God, trust in Christ as a Mediator, a willingness to forsake sin, from which they pray to be delivered, and thankfulness for the divine mercies. In this manner they resemble the Jews spoken of in Isa. 29:13, “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth; and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men;” and in Psa. 78:36, 37, “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” And many of them make a show in words, in conversation with their neighbor, that is quite inconsistent with their hearts. They are forward in religious conversation, in giving an account of their experience in a show of zeal, merely to be seen of men, their God is themselves, their own honor, and the esteem of men. It is themselves whom they love and honor in everything, and not God.

They often make that show in their external behavior that is inconsistent with their hearts. Many who are destitute of the least spark of love to God, and are at utter enmity with him, will make a great show of respect to him in many things in their behavior. They may put on a religious saint-like visage, may seem devout in keeping the sabbath, and in their attendance on religious duties and the ordinances of worship, may in some things be very strict, and may appear to do all from a holy respect to God. So it was of old with the Israelites. Isa. 58:1, 2, 3, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their

transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours."

So did the Pharisees of old. They made a great show of love and holy regard to God in their behavior. They abounded in religious duties, they fasted twice a week, and they were very strict in many things. They were so in many duties of the moral law, they were not extortioners, nor unjust, nor adulterers. And they were exceedingly exact in duties of the ceremonial law. They gave tithes of all that they possessed, and so exact were they in paying tithes, that they tithed all the herbs of their gardens, as mint, anise, and the like, and put on an exceedingly religious countenance, and wore a righteous garment for a show of great humility. And yet had no love to God in their hearts, but were a generation of vipers, and most bitter enemies to God and Christ, and cruel persecutors of good men.

V. The practice of wicked men is often very inconsistent with their profession.

It is so, whether we look at the profession which they make in common with others who are brought up under the light of the gospel, or at the distinguishing and extraordinary profession which some of them make.

First, if we look at the professions which they make in common with the generality of those who are brought up under the gospel. These do in general profess that there is a God, an infinitely great and holy God, who hates sin, and who is everywhere present, who always sees them, has his eye continually upon them, sees what they do in secret as well as what is done openly. A God, who not only knows all their words and actions, but sees all their thoughts, and who is able to do what he pleases with them, and can save or destroy them as he will.

But how does the practice of the greater part of them consist with their

profession when they live in direct opposition to his commands, when they live as though there were no God that had the care and government of the world, and as though he were not a holy God, but altogether such an one as themselves, liking ways of sin as well as they, or as though they thought him a weak being, and not able to do them any great matter of hurt, or as though they thought they were stronger than he, and should be able to make their part good with him another day? 1 Cor. 10:22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"

How does that wickedness, which many persons who are brought up under gospel light commit in secret, those abominable secret practices of which many young people are guilty, agree with their professing that God is everywhere present? These things they do not commit openly for fear of human punishment, or for fear of shame and disgrace among men. And yet they commit them boldly, and live on them in the sight of God, upon whose favor they profess that their happiness infinitely more depends than on the esteem of men.

They profess to believe that there is another world, and a future judgment, and that they must in a little time stand before the judgment-seat of God, to give an account of themselves to him. And that then the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart made manifest. And that then God will call them to a strict account of their improvement of their time, and all their talents, and that for every idle word men must give account in the day of judgment. And that then every man shall have his state everlastingly and unalterably fixed by the sentence of the great Judge, according to the things done in the body, that they who have done well shall be invited into heaven, where they shall enjoy honor, and glory, and pleasure unspeakable forevermore, and that they who have done evil, shall be sentenced and sent down to hell, into everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels, where they shall endure unspeakable torments, as in a furnace of fire, without any end, or any hope, and that they shall have no rest day nor night; and that their souls shall be fixed in one or other of those states in a little time, as soon as ever the body dies.

Now how does their practice consist with such a profession, while they live idle, careless lives, little troubling themselves about the good of their

souls, and have their hearts and pursuits after the vanities of the world, just as if they never expected any other world but this, going on in sins against the plainest commands, and loudest warnings, and fullest light, and conviction of their own conscience? How does this consist with the profession of a belief that they must in a little time be called to give account of themselves to God? Would any spectator who should judge only by their practice, in the least imagine that these men expected within a few years to burn in everlasting fire, if they did not please and serve an infinitely holy God, and to be received to an everlasting paradise of blessedness if they did. Could he be persuaded to think that such men are in heart, as they profess to be, the followers of the meek, holy, and humble Lamb of God, of him who laid down his life for his enemies?

Second, if we look at the profession which some of them make of special and distinguishing experiences of the influence of God's grace in their hearts, their practice is very inconsistent with their profession. Persons may make a profession of such experiences, and yet be carnal and wicked men. So did some of the Galatians, of whom the apostle was afraid, lest he had bestowed upon them labor in vain. They professed great experience of the sweetness and blessedness which is to be had in religion, and experienced in the truths of the gospel. Gal. 4:11, 15, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." At their first seeming conversion, they appeared to be exceedingly lifted up with their new light, and full of joy and comfort, and full of affection. But by this expostulation of the apostle it appears that their lives afterwards did not well agree with their profession. Some wicked men may profess that they have seen their own utter insufficiency and helplessness, their own vileness and wickedness, and have been brought to God's footstool self-emptied and self-abased, as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. But yet how ill does their walk and life agree with such a profession! In this none appear fuller of themselves than they. None seem to manifest more of a spirit of self-sufficiency, and of dependence on their own righteousness, or more high conceit of their own goodness, or are more ready to say to others, "Stand by thyself, come not nigh to me, for I am holier than thou." None appear in their walk and

conversation further from lying in the dust as being poor in spirit than they. So it was with the Pharisees, they pretended to be extraordinarily emptied of themselves, and to have a low thought of themselves, in their wearing a rough garment, and in so often keeping days of fasting. And yet none were more self-righteous and self-sufficient than these very men, who are set forth in sacred history as living examples of self-righteousness to all succeeding ages.

So some of them may profess that they have had great discoveries made to their souls of God's glory and excellency, and that they have seen how much more glorious God is than all earthly things. But if it be so, why do not they cleave to God, and follow him, rather than other things? If they have known God to be so much more excellent than the things of the world, because they have had acquaintance with God, why do they in their practice cast off God for the sake of the things of the world? Why do they in their practice prefer a little of the world, a little worldly gain, a little worldly honor, or a little worldly convenience or pleasure, before God? Certainly, if God be more excellent than the whole world, as they profess that they have seen him to be, then surely he is worth more than so small a part of the world.

So they may tell what love they have found in their hearts to God, how they have found their hearts drawn out in love to him at different times. But if they love him so well, why do they take no more care to please him? Why are they so careless of his honor, and of their duty to him? Why do they allow themselves in practices which they know he hates, and utterly forbids?

So they may profess that they have seen the truth of the gospel, and that they not only think, but know, that the Scripture is the Word of God. But if it be so, why do they not take more heed to it? why do they live not only as if they were not certain of it, but as if they were certain of the contrary? If they know that those commands which are in the Bible are the commands of God, then they are worthy of the greatest regard. If they know that those promises and threatenings which are found there are the promises and threatenings of God, then surely they should be of great weight with us. Why do they seem to be of so little weight with them?

So they may tell how God has manifested his love to their souls, has given his Spirit to witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and that they have much communion with God. But if God has done such great things for them, and they are admitted to such unspeakable privileges above others, surely they ought to do more than others. They should not appear more carnal, and careless, and unchristian in their temper and walk than other men who make no such pretenses. Thus wicked men's practice is very often inconsistent with their profession, agreeably to Tit. 1:16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hope of eternal life. Men in general who live in Christian countries, hope to go to heaven, and there to possess eternal glory with God, and Christ, and holy saints and angels, though some of them have a much more confident hope than others. Some of them think that God has already made over this glory to them by firm promises, they look on heaven as their own, they think they belong to that world, and have an inheritance reserved there for them.

But the practice of wicked men is very inconsistent with such a hope, it is very displeasing to that God, and that glorious Redeemer, with whom they hope to spend their eternity in heaven. Though they live wickedly, yet they hope in a little time to go to be with an infinitely holy God, to be received by him with perfect approbation and delight, to be near to him, and to dwell in the courts of his love. They hope to enter into that same holy of holies, into which Christ the forerunner of saints has entered, and there to dwell, there to be as a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. Yea, they hope there to sit in that heavenly holy of holies, to be admitted to a higher privilege than the high priests were of old in the earthly holy of holies, who were admitted only to appear in the holy of holies once a year. What holiness was expected of the high priests of old who were admitted to this privilege! What holiness then may well be expected of those who hope to be admitted to a so much greater privilege!

Their wicked life is very unsuitable to that state of heaven. Those who are in heaven are all perfectly holy, and so must they become if ever they go to heaven. They will perfectly hate all wickedness, and perfectly delight in the contrary. How disagreeable therefore is the hope of spending eternity in such a heaven, to their wallowing like swine in the filth and mire of sin, and feeding with such eagerness and delight on the loathsome objects of their lusts, as worms feed with pleasure on the loathsome carcass!

Their wicked life is very unfit for the company of heaven, with which they must spend an eternity, if ever they arrive there, even with the holy angels and saints. Heb. 12:22, 23, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." How disagreeable is a carnal, worldly, sensual, impure life, to a hope of being one of such an assembly as this to all eternity!

Their wicked life is very disagreeable to the eternal business of heaven, which consists in employing their faculties altogether on holy objects, in employing their understandings in viewing and contemplating the holy perfections of God, and his wonderful works, and their wills and affections in loving God, and delighting themselves in him, and their whole souls in praising and serving him. Rev. 22:3, 4, "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." How inconsistent is a life spent in this world in the service of lust and of the devil, to a hope of spending eternity in such a holy manner as this!

Their wicked life is unfitted for the pleasure and entertainment of heaven, which consist in delighting and rejoicing in God, in loving him, and in holy communion with him. How unsuited to a hope of enjoying such a happiness as this throughout eternity is it to place all one's delight and happiness here in hoarding up worldly pelf, in gratifying the bodily appetites and sensitive desires, and in those pleasures that are common to the cattle and the swine?

Wicked men hope to spend their eternity in that world, which is a world of perfect peace and love, and to dwell there forever, where are no jars nor strife, but perfect agreement, harmony, and love forever. Yet many of them live a life of malice and contention in this world, are very often in one strife or other, and always carry about in their breasts a malice and hatred towards some of their neighbors, and towards some of those same persons with whom they pretend to hope to spend their eternity in such perfect love and amity. If we in our thoughts compare the life that many men actually live in this world, with that life which they hope to live in another world, how ill do they consist together; how disagreeable and shocking is the comparison, or the union of them in our thoughts! How many are there who now are drunkards or unclean persons, or who live in the neglect of secret prayer, and who cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. And how many that are mere earth-worms in covetousness and eagerness after the world; how many proud men whose God is their earthly honor; how many wrathful men who spend their days in hatred of their neighbor; how many such are there who hope in a little time to be with an infinitely holy God, in his glorious presence, in his holy of holies, and with Jesus Christ, and in the arms of his love, and to be of the assembly of holy angels and saints in perfect purity, holiness, and love, loving, contemplating, and admiring God's glory, and enjoying unspeakable blessedness in communion with God! Thus wicked men's practice disagrees with their hopes.

VII. The practice of wicked men is inconsistent with itself.

First, their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another. They are not of a piece with themselves at different times, but are such as the apostle James compares to "a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed;" and such as he called "double-minded." At one time they are of one mind, with respect to the things of religion; and at another, of another; and so have one mind against another. It is so with false professors of religion. They are not steadfast in God's covenant, nor in the practice of religion. At one time they may seem to be much affected

with the things of religion, and greatly engaged in their spirits about it, as though they could even pluck out their own eyes for God and Christ's sake, may be full of religious conversation, and may seem forward in religious deeds. But, if we observe them, all their goodness is as the morning cloud, all their religiousness is over, and they appear as carnal, and senseless, and as irreligious as ever. Their religious affections are all gone, their religious practice is gone, and "it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

So it is with the hearers, that hear the Word of God, and anon with joy receive it, but in time of temptation fall away. So it was with many of Christ's followers. They followed him for a while, and by and by left him.

There were some who seemed to believe in Christ and followed him for a while. But Christ did not commit himself to them, he knew they were of an unstable mind, and would not be consistent with themselves. Some of them were for a while greatly affected with his preaching and with the miracles that he wrought, and it is said of them that the glorified God who had given such power to men, and said, "Never man spake like this man." John 7:46. And it seems as though some of the same Jews who had their affections so raised when Christ was coming into Jerusalem, and who cried, "Hosannah to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" did presently after cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" There are many professors like those, and like the Israelites, that sang God's praise, and soon forgat his works, and waited not for his counsel, that "turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow." That is, a bow that missed the mark to which it seemed to direct the arrow. The arrow seems to be pointed right, as though it would hit the mark, but yet the bow unexpectedly tends quite another way.

There are many disciples like Judas, who was at one time a disciple, and a traitor at another. It is commonly so that when false professors come to be tried by any remarkable allurements of the world, or by special difficulties which they meet with in the way of duty, that their practice as such times is quite inconsistent with their practice at other times. While times are smooth, and the way plain, and the external practice of religion

seems to be consistent with their worldly interests, they are very religious. But when times are changed, and they cannot be religious without seeing them crossed, they appear quite another sort of men.

Thus their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another.

Second, their practice in some things is inconsistent with their practice in others at the same time.

1. Their moral and religious practice in some things does not consist with their irreligious and impure practice in others. False professors are very commonly widely different in this respect from those who are sincere and upright. Sincere Christians are universally holy. They have regard to all God's commands. It is their sincere desire, aim, and endeavor to do their duty in every respect. But it is generally far otherwise with hypocrites. In some things they are like Christians, in others like heathens. Sometimes they appear earnestly religious in duties that immediately respect God, as in attending ordinances, and in appearing devout in external duties of the first table. But in duties that respect their neighbor, there is but little appearance of Christianity. Some behave themselves like saints in God's house, and like devils at home. Some seem to be very religious abroad, in the house of God, and also at the houses of their neighbors, at private meetings, and in religious conferences. But if you follow them into their own families, and observe their carriage there towards those who dwell under the same roof, towards their wives, or husbands, or children, or servants, their behavior there does not at all consist with the other. So some may carry themselves well in their families, and yet are wretchedly negligent of the religion of the closet. Some seem to be religious men, who are not honest men. Some are honest men, and are not religious. They are willing to pay their debts, to speak the truth, and to avoid all knavish actions, all low and underground management. But as to religion, or to seeking God in the religious use of his ordinances, and in reading his holy word, in meditation and prayer, there is but little of this to be seen in them.

Some are honest men with respect to strict commutative justice, but they are not charitable men. They are selfish, covetous, close, and unmerciful.

Some seem to be generous and liberal, and yet are very proud and haughty. Their honor is their God. Some are very strict and exemplary as to all that can be seen of men, but secretly they live in some abominable practice. So their practice does not consist with itself. It is not of a piece. God complains of this self-inconsistency in Israel of old. Hos. 7:8, "Ephraim hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned." "He hath mixed himself among the people;" that is, he was conversant with the heathen nations, and mingled the religion and customs of an Israelite with those of the heathen; so that he was inconsistent with himself, he was partly an Israelite and partly a heathen. "He is a cake not turned," alluding to their custom of baking cakes on the hearth, or in the sun; where, if they were not turned, one side would be baked, and the other raw. So they on one side seemed to appear religious, and like saints, but on the other, wicked and impure. So it was with the Pharisees. In some things they appeared eminently religious, but in others they behaved themselves as some of the vilest of me. Mat. 23:14, 23, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence, make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." A true saint is sanctified throughout, in soul, body, and spirit. He has put off the old man with his deeds, and has put on the new man. He is all over a new creature. He has not only a new hand and head, but he is a new man, all the members are new. But hypocrites are monsters. They have a saint's tongue, and a devil's heart. The members do not well consist together. They are inconsistent with themselves as they go about to serve two masters, God and Mammon, which Christ has taught us to be a great inconsistency. They are alike inconsistent as the Samaritans were, who would serve the God of Israel and their own god too. 2 Kin. 17:28, etc. "Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt."

There is the like inconsistency in them as was in Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss. How ill did those two things in Judas consist together, his coming to him and kissing him, his seeming to show himself his friend, and at the same time betraying him to death! But it was not greater inconsistency than is commonly found with hypocritical professors, who carry themselves as Christ's friends, and as though he were very dear to them in some things, and yet act the part of mortal enemies in others, and by their wicked behavior do indeed betray his cause and interest.

2. Their wicked practice in one thing is inconsistent with their wicked practice in others. It is a common thing for wicked men to quarrel with God for permitting those things which they allow themselves, and practice with delight. It is common for wicked men to ascribe the blame of their wickedness to God, therein following their first father, Adam. So men will often lay the blame of their being unconverted, and having lived so wicked a life, so carnal, careless, and evil a life, to God, and especially under conviction, to quarrel with God for it. And yet they approved of those things which they did themselves, with full consent and approbation.

And again. It is common for wicked men to contend with men, and hate their neighbor, for doing the same thing that they do themselves, and allow in themselves. So an unjust man, a backbiter and reviler, a revengeful man, will *condemn* in others the sin which he allows in himself. And so, many other instances might be mentioned. And thus I have showed through all the instances proposed, how wicked men are inconsistent with themselves.

APPLICATION

I. Hence we may see the woeful ruin which sin has brought on the nature

of man. Man was not thus in his first estate. If we had nothing but the light of nature, or the light of our own reason to guide us, that would be sufficient to lead us to conclude that man in his first estate was not made thus by his Creator, who has made other things in such excellent order and harmony. We see that God hath so made the world, that one thing sweetly harmonizes with another, all things are adapted to each other, the nature of one thing to the nature of another; one thing to be subservient to another; and all things subject to the laws that the Creator has fixed.

We therefore, without the Scripture, should have all reason to conclude that man, the most noble of all the creatures in the visible world, was not made in this state of woeful inconsistency with himself; so that all the faculties of his nature are at war with each other, and at war with themselves; so that now there is nothing but the most dreadful confusion to be seen.

But the Scripture teaches us plainly that God saw all things that he had created and made, and behold, they were very good; and particularly that God made man upright, and that it is himself that has brought ruin on his own nature. In man's first estate all things were in perfect order in his nature. There shone such a light in his understanding as led him to right judgments of things, all the dictates of his understanding were consistent one with another. And then his reason, the superior faculty, kept its place, and bare rule in him over the other faculties, and there was no principle or faculty of his nature but what was subject to its dictates, nothing rose up in rebellion against it. His will then was agreeable to his reason, and agreeable with itself. There was a perfect harmony between his outward appearance and his inward character. His mouth and his heart and his mouth and practice then agreed together, and his practice then was of a piece. Until he ate of the forbidden fruit, all was in perfect order, and peace, and decorum, both within and without.

But what was the consequence when man hearkened to the devil, and rebelled against his Maker? We learn, by what has been said under this doctrine, that then the Spirit of God departed from him, and with his influence, God's holy image also, the life, the crown, and glory of his nature left him, and all light, and regularity, and order were gone, and a worse darkness and confusion succeeded than was in the primitive chaos

when it was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And such is the woeful confusion of the nature of all men now in their fallen state. Now their reason determines one thing, and their governing practical judgment the reverse of it. And their judgment in some things is utterly inconsistent with their judgment in others. Now the will is in no consistency with the reason, but commonly determines directly contrary to its dictates. Men's wills are in such bondage and slavery to their lusts, that they are not only determined contrary to their own consciences to choose those things which their reason tells them are unjust, and vile, and unbecoming their nature, but also those things which their reason at the same time declares to be exceedingly against their own highest interest, even so as to tend to their everlasting perdition. Yea, their dispositions are not only contrary to their own reason and consciences, but contrary to themselves. There is not only war between faculty and faculty, but the very same faculty is at war with itself, so that they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things at the same time. There are some things that they seem earnestly to wish for, and yet indeed are at the same time utterly averse to and refuse, and will by no means accept of when offered. Yea, they will not have them though they are urged, and entreated, and pleaded with for years together to accept of them. So inconsistent are their dispositions with themselves, that they will not have spiritual and divine things as they are, nor yet will they have them otherwise. They do not like God as he is, they find abundance of fault with him, they are urged to accept of him as their God, but they will by no means comply with it. They reject him, and have an enmity against him. They love to keep at a distance from him, and to have as little as possible to do with him, and will not hearken to him, or submit to him, but are ever maintaining a kind of warfare against him, because they do not like him as he is. And yet they would not like him if he were any otherwise. If it were possible that he could be altered from what he is in any respect whatsoever, they would refuse to accept of him as their God then. They are enemies to him because he is so holy and just a God, and yet they would not like him if he were unholy and unjust. They do not like his almighty power, and yet they would not like him if he were weak. They also dislike his knowing all things, and yet they would dislike him if he were ignorant. They quarrel with God for the exercise of his infinite mercy and grace to others, and the more for its being so great in some

instances, in being exercised towards those who are so unworthy. And yet they would not like him if he were not infinitely merciful. They would wish him to be merciful enough to pardon the most unworthy, and yet sometimes quarrel with him because he is no more merciful.

Now there is a similar inconsistency in them with themselves in that they do not like men for being godly. They have an enmity against such sort of men. And at the same time, they do not like those who are godly, they hate men for being wicked, and will have a bitter spirit against them for it. The world in its fallen state cannot agree with the church of God. It has always had a spite against it, and has almost always from the beginning of the world hitherto been persecuting it. And yet neither can they agree among themselves, but are at the same time contending and quarreling with one another. And as there is no suiting them in this world, so neither is there any suiting them in another. They would neither go to heaven, nor to hell. They do not like heaven because it is holy. And yet they would not like it if it were a world of wickedness. And such is the jarring and confusion that is in their disposition, that those things that they do choose are impossibilities, and self-contradictions, and self-inconsistencies. They would have a sufficient Savior and not a holy one. They would have one good, and excellent, and holy enough to save them, and yet would not have one with any holiness at all. They have a mind to have salvation from misery, without salvation from sin; when sin is their misery. They have a mind to have light, and yet to keep darkness without light. They would have a light consisting in darkness; and sweet, consisting in bitterness; and good, consisting in evil. They would have such a sort of happiness as is impossible in its own nature. For they would have happiness with unholiness, which is as much as to say they would be *happy* men, and yet remain *destroyed* and *ruined*. And when life and death are set before them to choose, and they are urged to make their choice, and told that they must certainly have one or the other, that there is no possibility of avoiding it; yet they will come to a deliberate, determinate choice to have neither one nor the other. They are always halting between two opinions, they are always choosing and yet never come to a choice. Instead of those holy principles that man had in his heart at first, that sweetly consented one with another, he has now introduced into his soul a number of vile and hateful lusts, that clash one

with another: pride clashing with covetousness, and covetousness thwarting sensuality, and sloth crushing all these. And instead of the purity in body and mind, which man had at first, he is now, if he has any show of purity, become like a whited sepulcher, that is beautifully adorned outside, and within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Their faces disagree with their hearts, and their mouths disagree with their hearts. They have the visage and show of saints, and the hearts of devils. Their prayers are filled up with thanksgiving, adoration, great honor to God, praise and glory to him, a show of humility before him, a show of repentance for sin, trust, thankfulness, desire of obedience, and trust in Christ alone; when within is nothing but a slight and contempt of God, enmity against God, distrust of God, pride, self-righteousness, obstinacy, and disobedience, without one jot or tittle of honor, or love, or trust, or humility, or repentance, or obedience, or any of those things that there is a show of in their prayers. And now they say and profess one thing, and practice another. They will show one thing to God, and do another, and will live all their days in this world carnally, contentious, and alienated from God, in the indulgence of brutish lusts and filthiness. And yet hope when they die to go to be with him, and in eternal communion with him in perfect holiness, and with holy angels, spending an eternity in holy contemplation and praise, and to have these things for their everlasting happiness. And when they seem to practice well for a time it lasts but a little while, but their practice at one time is utterly inconsistent with that at another. Yea, if they were narrowly observed, their practice at the same time is inconsistent with itself: saints at church, and heathen at home; saints before the world, heathen in secret; with the tongues and faces of the children of God, and with the hearts of the children of the devil.

Such work has the fall made in the nature of man, such a creature as this is man become, instead of shining as at first, in the holy and lovely image of God. Thus has the fall of man ruined God's workmanship. And if the fall has *thus* ruined man, what can be more effectually ruined? Does not this show that it is indeed so, that man is in a lost and undone condition. And can it be expected that any other can ever restore to him the divine image, but only that same God that made him at first? And how vain are the attempts of natural men to rectify their natures in their own strength,

wherein is such woeful ruin and confusion! And is there not need of a mighty Savior in order to this?

II. This subject may be applied in the way of conviction to natural men, in several particulars.

First, hence you may see your folly. Wisdom is ever consistent with itself, and wise men are not wont to act inconsistently. Self-inconsistency in temporal things is ever looked upon as a note of folly. Those men that talk very inconsistently, are accounted to talk very foolishly. And so those men that act inconsistently with themselves in temporal matters, are looked upon as acting very absurdly and ridiculously, and it is common with men to treat such with derision. Certainly, then, to be so exceedingly self-inconsistent in such great concerns as we have spoken of, is the highest degree of folly.

The inconsistency of the judgment of wicked men shows their folly. It shows the foolishness of those practical judgments they govern themselves by, that they make them contrary to the plain dictates of their own reason. Men oftentimes count the judgments of others very foolish, because they are very inconsistent with other men's reason, though their judgments are formed according to the best light of their own reason. But how much more foolish is it for men, in such things as infinitely concern them, to make such practical judgments of things as are plainly contrary not only to other men's reason, but to their own; so as to determine their will and their practice by those judgments! As for instance, when men's practical judgment and conclusion within themselves, by which they determine their choice and practice, is that it is best for them for the present, to neglect their souls and seek the vanities of this world, which are but for a moment, more than their eternal welfare.

And how does it show the folly of men's judgment when some of their judgments are inconsistent with others; as when in one thing they will judge that a long-continued eternity is of less importance than this short

and fleeting life! So it shows the great folly of men's wills and dispositions, that they are so inconsistent, that in some respects they will both choose and refuse the same things, will wish and pray for them, and take pains for them, and yet will not have them when offered. How madly would a man be looked upon to act, that should so act in temporal concerns, if he was sick and like to perish for want of a certain medicine, and should wish and long for that medicine, and ask others to seek it for him, and yet when it was bought and offered, he should utterly refuse it!

What folly does it argue that men's dispositions are so inconsistent with each other, that there is no suiting them with anything! They are pleased neither with piping nor mourning, with eating nor fasting. They will not have God, or Christ, or heaven as they are, and yet will not have either any otherwise. How would men, if they manifested such a disposition in temporal things, often be hissed at, as most ridiculous, childish, and foolish. Yea, and be accounted to act like madmen! And what folly does it discover that they will choose and accept of nothing but that which is impossible in its own nature, and a self-contradiction, as when they will have happiness without holiness! If any man should act thus in temporal things, if he would have no house because he could not build one in the air, if he refused to go because he could not go without feet, or to see because he could not see without eyes, what words would be thought adequate to describe his folly! Yet this is the very folly of sinners with regard to their salvation.

How would men be looked upon if they acted thus in their temporal affairs! If they must inevitably perish in the winter if they did not labor in the summer, and yet spend all the summer in halting between two opinions. Or if they were sick with some deadly disease, and were told that they must inevitably die if they did not send for a physician, yet were undetermined, and when the distemper increased upon them, still continued undetermined, and when it was come to extremity, and seemed very near death, still could not come to a conclusion; or if a house should be on fire over their heads, and they could not make up their minds to flee from under it.

And what folly does it argue for men, that their practices are so inconsistent with their hearts, and that they say one thing and do

another, and so are unsteady in their practice, and inconsistent with themselves at different times! It is looked upon as great folly, and what persons are much to be ashamed of, to be so unsteady in temporal matters, to undo one day what they did another. And so, in their practice in some things to be inconsistent with their practice in others. In one thing to act like a friend, and in another like an enemy. Persons that do so in temporals are abhorred of men, and looked upon as not fit for human society.

Second, you may hereby be convinced of your misery. A man cannot be happy, and cannot but be miserable, with whom it is thus. It shows a man to be undone. He, whose nature is brought into such violation, is evidently brought into a state of ruin. Where there is such self-inconsistency and self-opposition, a man is at war with himself, and therefore must be miserable. It is a calamity for a man not to be at peace with his neighbor, and to live in contention with those that are about him. But certainly it is a much greater calamity for him to be at war with himself, to have his judgment at war with his judgment, and his will at war with his reason and conscience, and his will at war with itself, and one lust thwarting another, and his outward man at war with his inward man, his mouth contradicting his heart, his practice contradicting his profession, and contradicting itself. It is impossible that such a man should enjoy any happiness as long as things are thus within him. Do what you will here, you cannot make him happy. If you take him and place him in a palace, and set him on a throne, and clothe him in the robes of princes, and put a crown of gold on his head, and set before him the richest dainties, feed him and feast him as much as you will, still he that so disagrees with himself, is a miserable wretch. Though he may be stupid, yet it is impossible he should enjoy any true peace or rest. How should he, in whom all things are in such utter confusion and uproar within, and in whom there is so much self-opposition.

This may convince us of the truth, and show us the reason, of Isa. 57:20, 21, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

How should he have any peace, who is his own enemy, who chooses and

practices these things which his own conscience condemns, and which his own reason tells him tend to his own ruin? How should he have any peace, that hates his own soul and loves his own death, and that has one lust holding him one way, and another the contrary, so as in some respects to choose and refuse the same thing, to wish for a thing that at the same time he hates and refuses, and so goes on from day to day in warring against himself?

Third, this shows your inexcusableness. By this inconsistency with yourself, you are condemned out of your own mouth in that you act contrary to your own conscience. Your own conscience condemns you in your will and practice being contrary to your own reason. Your own reason condemns you in acting contrary to your profession. Your own profession condemns you in the sense in which the apostle speaks of a heretic as being condemned of himself. Tit. 3:10, 11, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself:" *i.e.* he in departing from his former profession is inconsistent with himself. His present heretical tenets are contrary to his former solemn profession, and therefore that former profession condemns him.

Consider how inexcusable you, who are thus inconsistent with yourself in your wickedness, will appear at the last day, when you come to stand before the judgment-seat of God, when you are by him called to an account for your wicked life, how will your mouth be stopped. When you are called to an account why you have preferred things of such short and uncertain continuance as the things of this vain world, to the great things of the eternal world, what will you have to say for yourself, when it shall appear that herein you acted in direct opposition to the plain dictates of your own reason, and that this choice is inconsistent with the judgment and choice you were wont to make in temporal things? And what will you say for yourself when you are called to give an account why you rejected God, and Christ, and heaven for their holiness; when it so plainly appears that you would not like them, and would not have accepted them, if they had been any other way than holy?

It will then appear that you have voluntarily rejected Christ and his great salvation, and refused to accept of heaven, and that you are condemned

of yourself in it, in that at the same time you evinced the great necessity of those things in praying for them, and doing many things in order to the obtaining of them.

When it shall then appear how you had a mind to have impossibilities: as a sufficiently worthy Savior, and not a holy one; salvation from misery, and not salvation from sin, the source of all misery; and happiness without holiness. It shall from hence most plainly appear, that you did in effect utterly refuse to accept of any Savior or any salvation at all, and would not be saved from misery at all, and refused to accept of any happiness at all, because you would have no salvation, no happiness, but such as was impossible in the nature of things, such a salvation as was not and could not be. And then how just will it appear to your own conscience, and to the world, that you should e'en go without salvation!

And when it shall appear how you had life and death set before you, and were told the necessity of coming to a choice, and were so often urged to it, and had so much opportunity for it, and yet refused. How just will it appear that divine justice should make your choice for you, when you refused to make any for yourself!

And how will you appear condemned out of your own mouth, when you shall be called to an account by the Judge, why you so often professed to God in your prayers that he was an infinitely great and holy God, and yet never feared him. And why you so often said to God that he was a sovereign and righteous God, and yet never submitted to him. And why you so often said to him that the was an all-sufficient and faithful God, and yet never would put your trust in him. And why you so often said to him that he was an infinitely glorious, and excellent, and good God, and yet never loved him. And why you so often owned that he was an infinitely gracious and bountiful God, and what you had received abundance of kindness from him, and owned him to be the author of all those good things of your life that you enjoy, and yet never were truly thankful to him, but improved those things that you owned were the gifts of God, against himself who was the giver of them. Why you so often owned in your prayers before God that you were a poor sinful, vile creature for your sins, and yet never would forsake your sins, and begged of God to keep you from sin, and yet carelessly and willfully went on in

the commission of sin? What will you say to such interrogations of the Judge of heaven and earth? Will not your mouth be stopped when it shall appear that what has already so often proceeded out of your own mouth, does so much condemn you? And what will hypocrites and self-pretenders to experiences say, who have told what discoveries they had of the glory of God, of Christ, and of heaven. When the Judge inquires of them, why they set so light by this God, and did so prefer the dust of the earth and the filth of sin before him? When those who have often told what love they have felt to the Lord Jesus Christ, are asked why they took no more care to please and honor him, and why they rather chose from time to time to reject him than sacrifice their worldly interest.

So when wicked men are inquired of why, when they professed to believe a future state, they took no more pains to prepare for it. Why, when they professed to be the followers of Christ the Lamb of God, they were no more like him? Why, when they owned him for their head, and expressed such wonderful love to him, they could turn and become his enemies? Why, when they lived in hope of a life of such unspeakable glory in heaven, they set their affections wholly on this world? Why, seeing they made such a show of regard to God and their duty at one time, they discovered such a total disregard at another? Why, when they made such pretenses to religion, and had such appearances of it in some things, they were so irreligious and wicked in others? What will they answer? Wicked men will appear self-condemned every way: their own reason and their own consciences, their own mouths and their own actions, have condemned them. Their reason and consciences will still condemn them, and God will condemn them, and men and angels will and must condemn them. So that they will appear universally condemned, they will have nothing to say for themselves, nor will any one have anything to say for them.

Fourth, if you are so inconsistent with yourself, you need not wonder that God will enter into no friendship with you, or that he does not receive you into his favor. Many natural men are ready to wonder that god will not receive them into favor — they do so much in religion.

But if you consider what has been said, you need not wonder at it. A wise man will make no friendship with another who is very inconsistent with

himself in those things wherein men are concerned with him. He will not associate himself with him, nor care to have such to communicate with him. For men know that such persons are not to be depended on. One does not know where to find them, nor how to suit them, and if they will be so inconsistent with themselves, certainly they will not be very consistent with others that trust them. God therefore justly refuses to receive such persons into union with him. It is not consistent with his divine wisdom to give himself to them in a covenant relation.

No wonder that Christ will not commit himself to such persons as these. John 2:23, 24, 25, "Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." Christ knew that there was no dependence to be had upon them. He knew they would not prove consistent with themselves.

Fifth, how vain and inconsistent is the dependence of wicked men on themselves! If this be the case with natural men, if all natural men are as we have heard, so absurdly inconsistent with themselves, how unreasonable is their high thought of themselves, and their trusting to their own goodness, to their own prayers, and their other performances!

And that they do so, is an evident sign of their woeful ignorance of themselves. If such persons saw themselves as they are, and to be such as we have described them, certainly they would be far from trusting in their own excellency and goodness, but would see themselves to be polluted, wretched, miserable, lost creatures, and would no more say in their hearts, "I am rich, and increased with goods;" but would rather condemn themselves, and cry out with self-abhorrence and amazement, "Unclean, unclean, undone, undone!"

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The Portion of the Wicked

"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." -- **Romans 2:8, 9**

Subject: Indignation, wrath, and misery and anguish of soul is the portion that God has allotted to wicked men.

It is the drift of the apostle in the three first chapters of this epistle, to show that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, and therefore cannot be justified by works of law, but only by faith in Christ. In the first chapter he had shown that the Gentiles were under sin. In this he shows that the Jews also are under sin, and that however severe they were in their censures upon the Gentiles, yet they themselves did the same things, for which the apostle very much blames them. “Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things.” And he warns them not to go on in such a way, by forewarning them of the misery to which they will expose themselves by it, and by giving them to understand, that instead of their misery being less than that of the Gentiles, it would be the greater, for God’s distinguishing goodness to them above the Gentiles. The Jews thought that they should be exempted from future wrath because God had chosen them to be his peculiar people. But the apostle informs them that there should be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man, not only to the Gentiles, but to every soul and to the Jews first and chiefly, when they did evil, because their sins were more aggravated.

In the text we find,

I. A description of wicked men, in which may be observed those qualifications of wicked men which have the nature of a cause, and those which have the nature of an effect.

Those qualifications of wicked men here mentioned that have the nature of a cause, are their being *contentious*, and *not obeying the truth*, but *obeying unrighteousness*. By their being contentious, is meant their being contentious against the truth, their quarreling with the gospel, their finding fault with its declarations and offers. Unbelievers find many things in the ways of God at which they stumble, and by which they are offended. They are always quarreling and finding fault with one thing or another, whereby they are kept from believing the truth and yielding to it. Christ is to them a stone of stumbling, and rock of offense. They do not obey the truth, that is, they do not yield to it, they do not receive it with faith. That yielding to the truth and embracing it, which there is in saving faith, is called *obeying*, in Scripture. Rom. 6:17, "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Heb. 5:9, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Rom. 1:5, "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." But they obey unrighteousness instead of yielding to the gospel, they are under the power and dominion of sin, and are slaves to their lusts and corruptions.

It is in those qualifications of wicked men that their wickedness radically consists. Their unbelief and opposition to the truth, and their slavish subjection to lust, are the foundation of all wickedness.

Those qualifications of wicked men, which have the nature of an effect, are their doing evil. This is the least of their opposition against the gospel, and of their slavish subjection to their lusts, that they do evil. Those wicked principles are the foundation, and their wicked practice is the superstructure. Those were the root, and this is the fruit.

II. The punishment of wicked men, in which may be also noticed the cause and the effect.

Those things mentioned in their punishment that have the nature of a cause, are *indignation* and *wrath; i.e.* the indignation and wrath of God. It is the anger of God that will render wicked men miserable. They will be the subjects of divine wrath, and hence will arise their whole punishment.

Those things in their punishment that have the nature of an effect, are *tribulation* and *anguish*. Indignation and wrath in God, will work extreme sorrow, trouble, and anguish of heart, in them.

Doctrine. Indignation, wrath, misery, and anguish of soul, are the portion that God has allotted to wicked men.

Everyone of mankind must have the portion that belongs to him. God allots to each one his portion. And the portion of the wicked is nothing but wrath, and distress, and anguish of soul. Though they may enjoy a few empty and vain pleasures and delights, for a few days while they stay in this world, yet that which is allotted to them by the Possessor and Governor of all things to be their portion, is only indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. This is not the portion that wicked men choose. The portion that they choose is worldly happiness, yet it is the portion that God carves out for them. It is the portion that they in effect choose for themselves. For they choose those things that naturally and necessarily lead to it, and those that they are plainly told, times without number, will issue in it. Pro. 8:36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." But whether they choose it or not, this will and must be the portion to all eternity of all who live and die wicked men. Indignation and wrath shall pursue them as long as they live in this world, shall drive them out of the world, and shall follow them into another world. And there wrath and misery shall abide upon them throughout eternity.

The method that I shall take in treating this subject, is to describe the wrath and misery of which wicked men shall be the subjects, both here and hereafter, in the successive parts and periods of it, according to the order of time.

I. I shall describe the wrath that often pursues wicked men in this life. Indignation and wrath often being with them here.

First, God oftentimes in wrath leaves them to themselves. They are left in their sins, and left to undo themselves, and work out their own ruin. He

lets them alone in sin. Hos. 4:17, “Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.” He often leaves them to go great lengths in sin, and does not afford them that restraining grace that he does to others. He leaves them to their own blindness, so that they always remain ignorant of God and Christ, and of the things that belong to their peace. They are sometimes left to hardness of heart, to be stupid and senseless, so that nothing will ever thoroughly awaken them. They are left to their own hearts’ lusts, to continue in some wicked practices all their days. Some are left to their covetousness, some to drunkenness, some to uncleanness, some to a proud, contentious, and envious spirit, and some to a spirit of finding fault and quarreling with God. God leaves them to their folly, to act exceedingly foolishly, to delay and put off the concerns of their souls from time to time, never to think the present time the best, but always to keep it at a distance, and foolishly to continue flattering themselves with hopes of long life, and to put far away the evil day, and to bless themselves in their hearts, and say, “I shall have peace, though I add drunkenness to thirst.” Some are so left that they are miserably hardened and senseless, when others all around them are awakened, and greatly concerned, and inquire what they shall do to be saved.

Sometimes God leaves men to a fatal backsliding for a misimprovement of the strivings of his Spirit. They are let alone, to backslide perpetually. Dreadful is the life and condition of those who are thus left of God. We have instances of the misery of such in God’s holy word, particularly of Saul and Judas. Such are, sometimes, very much left to the power of Satan to tempt them, to hurry them on in wicked courses, and exceedingly to aggravate their own guilt and misery.

Second, indignation and wrath are sometimes exercised towards them in this world, by their being cursed in all that concerns them, They have this curse of God following them in everything. They are cursed in all their enjoyments. If they are in prosperity, it is cursed to them. If they possess riches, if they have honor, if they enjoy pleasure, there is the curse of God that attends it. Psa. 92:7, “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they may be destroyed forever.”

There is a curse of God that attends their ordinary food. Every morsel of

bread which they eat, and every drop of water which they drink. Psa. 69:22, “Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.” They are cursed in all their employments, in whatsoever they put their hands to: when they go into the field to labor, or are at work at their respective trades. Deu. 28:16, “Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.” The curse of God remains in the houses where they dwell, and brimstone is scattered in their habitations. Job 18:15. The curse of God attends them in the afflictions which they meet with, whereas the afflictions that good men meet with, are fatherly corrections, and are sent in mercy. The afflictions which wicked men meet with are in wrath, and come from God as an enemy, and are the foretaste of their everlasting punishment. The curse of God attends them also in their spiritual enjoyments and opportunities, and it would have been better for them not to have been born in a land of light. Their having the Bible and the sabbath, is only to aggravate their guilt and misery. The Word of God when preached to them is a savor of death unto death. Better would it be for them, if Christ had never come into the world, if there had never been any offer of a Savior. Life itself is a curse to them. They live only to fill up the measure of their sins. What they seek in all the enjoyments, and employments, and concerns of life is their own happiness, but they never obtain it. They never obtain any true comfort, all the comforts which they have are worthless and unsatisfying. If they lived a hundred years with never so much of the world in their possession, their life is all filled up with vanity. All that they have is vanity of vanities, they find no true rest for their souls, they do but feed on the east wind, they have no real contentment. Whatever outward pleasures they may have, their souls are starving. They have no true peace of conscience, they have nothing of the favor of God. Whatever they do, they live in vain, and to no purpose. They are useless in the creation of God, they do not answer the end of their being. They live without God, and have not the presence of God, nor any communion with him. But on the contrary, all that they have and all that they do, does but contribute to their own misery, and render their future and everlasting state the more dreadful. The best of wicked men live but miserable and wretched lives, with all their prosperity. Their lives are most undesirable, and whatever they have, the wrath of God abides upon them.

Third, after a time they must die. Ecc. 9:3, "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

Death is a far different thing when it befalls wicked men, from what it is when it befalls good men. To the wicked it is in execution of the curse of the law, and of the wrath of God. When a wicked man dies, God cuts him off in wrath, he is taken away as by a tempest of wrath, he is driven away in his wickedness. Pro. 14:32, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." Job 18:18. "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world." Job 27:21, "The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and as a storm, hurleth him out of his place." Though wicked men, while they live, may live in worldly prosperity, yet they cannot live here always, but they must die. The place that knoweth him shall know him no more, and the eye that hath seen him shall see him no more in the land of the living.

Their bounds are unchangeably set, and when they are come to those bounds they must go, and must leave all their worldly good things. If they have lived in outward glory their glory shall not descend after them. They get nothing while they live that they can carry away. Ecc. 5:15, "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand." He must leave all his substance unto others. It they are at ease and quietness, death will put an end to their quietness, will spoil all their carnal mirth, and will strip them of all their glory. As they came naked into the world, so naked must they return, and go as they came. If they have laid up much goods for many years, if they have laid in stores, as they hope, for great comfort and pleasure, death will cut them off from all. Luke 12:16-20, "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou

fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided." If they have many designs and projects in their breasts for promoting their outward prosperity and worldly advantage, when death comes, it cuts all off at one blow. Psa. 146:4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And so whatever diligence they have had in seeking their salvation, death will disappoint all such diligence, it will not wait for them to accomplish their designs and fulfill their schemes. If they have pleased, and pampered, and adorned their bodies, death will spoil all their pleasure and their glory. It will change their countenances to a pale and ghastly aspect. Instead of their gay apparel and beautiful ornaments, they shall have only a winding-sheet. Their house must be the dark and silent grave; and that body which they deified, shall turn to loathsome rottenness, shall be eaten of worms, and turn to dust. Some wicked men die in youth, wrath pursues them, and soon overtakes them. They are not suffered to live out half their days. Job 36:14, "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean." Psa. 55:23, "But thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." They are sometimes overtaken in the very midst of their sin and vanity, and death puts a sudden end to all their youthful pleasures. They are often stopped in the midst of a career in sin, and then if their hearts cleave ever so fast to those things, they must be rent from them. They have no other good but outward good, but then they must eternally forsake it. They must close their eyes forever on all that has been dear and pleasant to them here.

Fourth, wicked men are oftentimes the subjects of much tribulation and anguish of heart on their death-beds. Sometimes the pains of body are very extreme and dreadful, and what they endure in those agonies and struggles for life, after they are past speaking, and when body and soul are rending asunder, none can know. Hezekiah had an awful sense of it. He compares it to a lion's breaking all his bones. Isa. 38:12, 13, "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off as a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." But this is but little to what is sometimes undergone by

wicked men in their souls when they are on their death-beds. Death appears sometimes with an exceedingly terrible aspect to them. When it comes and stares them in the face, they cannot bear to behold it. It is always so, if the wicked men have notice of the approach of death, and have reason and conscience in exercise, and are not either stupid or distracted. When this king of terrors comes to show himself to them, and they are called forth to meet him, O how do they dread the conflict! But meet him they must. “There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.” Death comes to them with all his dreadful armor, and his sting not taken away. And it is enough to fill their souls with torment that cannot be expressed. It is an awful thing for a person to be lying on a sick bed, to be given over by physicians, to have friends stand weeping round the bed as expecting to part with him, and in such circumstances as those, to have no hope, to be without an interest in Christ, and to have the guilt of his sins lying on his soul, to be going out of the world without his peace being made with God, to stand before his holy judgment-seat in all his sins without anything to plead or answer, and to see the only opportunity to prepare for eternity coming immediately to an end, after which there shall be no more time of probation. But his case will be unalterably fixed, and there never will be another offer of a Savior: for the soul to come just to the very edge of the boundless gulf of eternity, and insensibly to launch forth into it, without any God or Savior to take care of it, to be brought to the edge of the precipice, and to see himself falling down into the lake of fire and brimstone, and to feel that he has no power to stop himself. Who can tell the shrinkings and misgivings of heart in such a case? How does he endeavor to hang back, but yet he must go on. It is in vain to wish for further opportunity! O how happy does he think those that stand about him, who may yet live, may have their lives continued longer, when he must go immediately into an endless eternity! How does he wish it might be with him as with those who have a longer time to prepare for their trial! But it must not be so. Death, sent on purpose to summon him, will give him no release nor respite. He must go before the holy judgment-seat of God as he is, to have his everlasting state determined according to his works. To such persons, how differently do things appear from what they did in the time of health, and when they

looked at death as at a distance! How differently does sin look to them now, those sins which they used to make light of! How dreadful is it now to look back and consider how they have spent their time, how foolish they have been, how they have gratified and indulged their lusts, and lived in ways of wickedness. How careless they have been, and how they have neglected their opportunities and advantages, how they have refused to hearken to counsel, and have not repented in spite of all the warnings that were given! Pro. 5:11, 12, 13, "And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

How differently does the world appear to them now! They used to set much by it, and have their hearts taken up with it, but what does it avail them now? How insignificant are all their riches! Pro. 11:4, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." What different thoughts have they now of God, and of his wrath! They used to make light of the wrath of God, but how terrible does it now appear! How does their heart shrink at the thoughts of appearing before such a God! How different are their thoughts of time! Now time appears precious. O what would they not give for a little more time! Some have in such circumstances been brought to cry out, O, a thousand worlds for an hour, for a *moment!* And how differently does eternity now appear! Now it is awful indeed. Some have been brought on a death-bed to cry out, O that word Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! What a dismal gulf does it appear to them, when they come to the very brink! They often at such times cry for mercy, and cry in vain. God called, and they would not hear. "They set at nought his counsels, and would none of his reproofs. Now also he laughs at their calamity, and mocks when their fear cometh." They beseech others to pray for them, they send for ministers, but all often fails them. They draw nearer and nearer to death, and eternity comes more and more immediately in view. And who can express their horror, when they feel themselves clasped in the cold arms of death, when their breath fails more and more, and their eyes begin to be fixed and grow dim! That which is then felt by them, cannot be told nor conceived. Some wicked men have much of the horror and despair of hell in their last sickness. Ecc. 5:17, "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much

sorrow and wrath with his sickness."

II. I shall describe the wrath that attends wicked men hereafter.

First, the soul, when it is separated from the body, shall be cast down into hell. There is without doubt a particular judgment by which every man is tried at death, beside the general judgment. For the soul, as soon as it departs from the body, appears before God to be judged. Ecc. 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." That is, to be judged and disposed of by him. Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But this particular judgment is probably no such solemn transaction as that which will be at the day of judgment. The soul must appear before God, but not in the manner that men shall appear at the end of the world. The souls of wicked men shall not go to heaven to appear before God. Neither shall Christ descend from heaven for the soul to appear before him. Neither is it to be supposed, that the soul shall be carried to any place where there is some special symbol of the divine presence, in order to be judged. But as God is everywhere present, so the soul shall be made immediately sensible of his presence. Souls in a separate state shall be sensible of the presence of God and of his operations in another manner than we now are. All separate spirits may be said to be before God. The saints are in his glorious presence, and the wicked in hell are in his dreadful presence. They are said to be tormented in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. 14:10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." So the soul of a wicked man, at its departure from the body, will be made immediately sensible that it is before an infinitely holy and dreadful God and his own final Judge. And will then see how terrible a God he is, he will see how holy a God he is, how infinitely he hates sin. He will be sensible of the greatness of God's anger against sin, and how dreadful is his displeasure. Then will he be sensible of the dreadful majesty and power of God, and how fearful a thing it is to fall into his hands. Then the soul shall come naked with all its guilt, and in all its filthiness, a vile, loathsome, abominable creature, an enemy to God, a rebel against him, with the guilt of all its rebellion

and disregard of God's commands, and contempt of his authority, and slight of the glorious gospel, before God as its Judge. This will fill the soul with horror and amazement. It is not to be supposed that this judgment will be attended with any voice or any such outward transactions as the judgment at the end of the world. But God shall manifest himself in his strict justice inwardly, to the immediate view of the soul, and to the sense and apprehension of the conscience. This particular judgment probably will not hinder, but that the soul shall be cast into hell immediately when it goes from the body. As soon as ever the soul departs from the body, the soul shall know what its state and condition are to be all eternity. As long as there is life, there is hope. The man, while he lived, though his case was exceedingly dreadful, yet had some hope. When he lay dying, there was a possibility of salvation. But when once the union between soul and body is broken, then that moment the case becomes desperate, and there remains no hope, no possibility. On their death-beds, perhaps, they had some hope that God would pity them and hear their cries, or that he would hear the prayers of their pious friends for them. They were ready to lay hold on something which they had at some time met with, some religious affection or some change in their external conduct, and to flatter themselves that they were then converted. They were able to indulge some degree of hope from the moral lives that they had lived, that God would have respect to them and save them, but as soon as ever the soul parts from the body, from that moment the case will be absolutely determined, there will then be an end forever to all hope, to everything that men hang upon in this life. The soul then shall know certainly that it is to be miserable to all eternity, without any remedy. It shall see that God is its enemy. It shall see its Judge clothed in his wrath and vengeance. Then its misery will begin, it will that moment be swallowed up in despair. The great gulf will be fixed between it and happiness, the door of mercy will be forever shut up, the irrevocable sentence will be passed. Then shall the wicked know what is before them. Before, the soul was in distress for fear how it would be. But now, all its fears shall come upon it. It shall come upon it as a mighty flood, and there will be no escaping. The soul was full of amazement before through fear. But now, who can conceive the amazement that fills it that moment when all hope is cut off, and it knows that there never will be any difference!

When a good man dies, his soul is conducted by holy angels to heaven. Luke 16:22, "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried." So we may well suppose that when a wicked man dies, his soul is seized by wicked angels, that they are round his bed ready to seize the miserable soul as soon as it is parted from the body. And with what fierceness and fury do those cruel spirits fly upon their prey, and the soul shall be left in their hands. There shall be no good angels to guard and defend it. God will take no merciful care of it. There is nothing to help it against those cruel spirits that shall lay hold of it to carry it to hell, there to torment it forever. God will leave it wholly in their hands, and will give it up to their possession, when it comes to die. It shall be carried down into hell, to the abode of devils and damned spirits. If the fear of hell on a death-bed sometimes fills the wicked with amazement, how will they be overwhelmed when they feel its torments, when they shall find them not only as great but far greater than their fears! They shall find them far beyond what they could conceive of before they felt them, for none know the power of God's anger, but they that experience it. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

Departed spirits of wicked men are doubtless carried to some particular place in the universe, which God has prepared to be the receptacle of his wicked, rebellious, and miserable subjects, a place where God's avenging justice shall be glorified, a place built to be the prison, and where devils and wicked men are reserved till the day of judgment.

Second, here the souls of wicked men shall suffer extreme and amazing misery in a separate state, until the resurrection. This misery is not indeed their full punishment, nor is the happiness of the saints before the day of judgment their full happiness. It is with the souls of wicked men as it is with devils. Though the devils suffer extreme torment now, yet they do not suffer their complete punishment, and therefore it is said, that they are cast down to hell, and bound in chains. 2 Pet. 2:4, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own

habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." They are reserved in the state they are in, and for what are they reserved, but for a greater degree of punishment? And therefore they are said to tremble for fear. Jam. 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." Hence when Christ was on earth, the devils were greatly afraid that Christ was come to torment them. Mat. 8:29, "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Mark 5:7, "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not."

But yet they are there in extreme and inconceivable misery, they are there deprived of all good, they have no rest nor comfort, and they are subject to the wrath of God. God there executes wrath on them without mercy, and they are swallowed up in wrath. Luke 16:24, "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Here we are being told that, when the rich man died, he lift up his eyes being in torment, and he tells Abraham that he is tormented in a flame. It seems that the flame was not only about him, but in him. He therefore asks for a drop of water to cool his tongue. This doubtless is to represent to us that they are full of the wrath of God as it were with fire, and they shall there be tormented in the midst of devils and damned spirits. And they shall have inexpressible torment from their own consciences. God's wrath is the fire that never shall be quenched, and conscience is the worm that never dies. How much do men suffer from horror of conscience sometimes in this world, but how much more in hell! What bitter and tormenting reflections will they have concerning the folly they have been guilty of in their lives, in so neglecting their souls, when they had such an opportunity for repentance; that they went on so foolishly to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to the record of their sins from day to day, to make their misery yet greater and greater. How they have kindled the fires of hell for themselves, and spent their lives in gathering the fuel! They will not be able to help revolving such thoughts in their minds. And how tormenting will they be! And

those who go to hell, never can escape thence. There they remain imprisoned till the day of judgment, and their torments remain continually. Those wicked men who died many years ago, their souls went to hell, and there they are still. Those who went to hell in former ages of the world, have been in hell ever since, all the while suffering torment. They have nothing else to spend their time in there, but to suffer torment, they are kept in being for no other purpose. And though they have many companions in hell, yet they are no comfort to them, for there is no friend, no love, no pity, no quietness, no prospect, no hope.

Third, the separate souls of the wicked, besides the present misery that they suffer, shall be in amazing fear of their more full punishment at the day of judgment. Though their punishment in their separate state be exceedingly dreadful, and far more than they can bear, though it be so great as to sink and crush them, yet this is not all. They are reserved for a much greater and more dreadful punishment at the day of judgment. Their torment will then be vastly augmented, and continue in that augmentation to all eternity. Their punishment will be so much greater then, that their misery in this separate state is but as an imprisonment before an execution. They, as well as the devils, are bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. Separate spirits are called "spirits in prison." 1 Pet. 3:19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." And if the imprisonment be so dreadful, how dreadful indeed will be the execution! When we are under any great pain of body at any time, how do we dread the least addition to it! Its continuance is greatly dreaded, much more its increase. How much more will those separate spirits that suffer the torments of hell, dread that augmentation and completing of their torment which there will be at the day of judgment, when what they feel already is vastly more than they can support themselves, when they shall be as it were begging for one drop of water to cool their tongues, and when they would give ten thousand worlds for the least abatement of their misery! How sinking will it be to think that instead of that the day is coming when God shall come forth out of heaven to sentence them to a far more dreadful degree of misery, and to continue them under it forever! What experience they have of the dreadfulness of God's wrath convinces them fully how terrible a thing his wrath is. They will therefore be exceedingly afraid of that full wrath which

he will execute at the day of judgment. They will have no hope of escaping it, they will know assuredly that it will come.

The fear of this makes the devils, those mighty, proud, and stubborn spirits, to tremble. They believe what is threatened, and therefore tremble. If this fear overcomes them, how much more will it overwhelm the souls of wicked men! All hell trembles at the thoughts of the day of judgment.

Fourth, when the day of judgment comes they shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. When that day comes, all mankind that have died from off the face of the earth shall arise; not only the righteous, but also the wicked. Dan. 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Rev. 20:13, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to his works." The damned in hell know not the time when the day of judgment will be, but when the time comes it will be made known, and it will be the most dreadful news that ever was told in that world of misery. It is always a doleful time in hell. The world of darkness is always full of shrieks and doleful cries. But when the news is heard, that the day appointed for the judgment is come, hell will be filled with louder shrieks and more dreadful cries than ever before. When Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to judgment, the news of it will fill both earth and hell with mourning and bitter crying. We read that all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, and so shall all the inhabitants of hell, and then must the souls of the wicked come up to be united to their bodies, and stand before the Judge. They shall not come willingly, but shall be dragged forth as a malefactor is dragged out of his dungeon to execution. They were unwilling when they died to leave the earth to go to hell, but now they will be much more unwilling to come out of hell to go to the last judgment. It will be no deliverance to them, it will only be a coming forth to their execution. They will hang back, but must come. The devils and damned spirits must come up together. The last trumpet will then be heard, this will be the most terrible sound to wicked men and devils that ever was heard. And not only the wicked, that shall then be found dwelling on the earth, shall hear it, but also those that

are in their graves. John 5:28, 29, “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” And then must the souls of the wicked enter their bodies again, which will be prepared only to be organs of torment and misery. It will be a dreadful sight to them when they come to their bodies again, those bodies which were formerly used by them as the organs and instruments of sin and wickedness, and whose appetites and lusts they indulged and gratified. The parting of soul and body was dreadful to them when they died, but their meeting again at the resurrection will be more dreadful. They shall receive their bodies loathsome and hideous, agreeably to that shame and everlasting contempt to which they shall arise. As the bodies of the saints shall arise more glorious than when on earth, and shall be like unto Christ’s glorious body, so we may well suppose that the bodies of the wicked will arise proportionably more deformed and hideous. Oftentimes in this world a polluted soul is hid in a fine and comely body, but it will not be so then when things shall appear as they are. The form and aspect of the body shall appear as they are, and the form and aspect of the body shall be answerable to the hellish deformity of the soul. Thus shall they rise out of their graves, and shall lift up their eyes, and see the Son of God in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels with him. Then shall they see their Judge in his awful majesty, which will be the most amazing sight to them that ever they saw, and will still add new horrors. That awful and terrible majesty in which he will appear, and the manifestation of his infinite holiness, will pierce their souls. They shall come forth out of their graves all trembling and astonished: fearfulness shall surprise them.

Fifth, then must they appear before their Judge to give up their account. They will find no mountains or rocks to fall upon them, that can cover them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Many of them will see others at that time, who were formerly their acquaintance, who shall appear with glorious bodies, and with joyful countenances and songs of praise, and mounting up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air, while they are left behind. Many shall see their former neighbors and acquaintance, their companions, their brothers, and their wives taken

and they left. They shall be summoned to go and appear before the judgment-seat, and go they must, however unwilling. They must stand at Christ's left hand, in the midst of devils and wicked men. This shall again add still further amazement, and will cause their horror still to be in a further degree than ever. With what horror will that company come together! And then shall they be called to their account; then shall be brought to light the hidden things of darkness; then shall all the wickedness of their hearts be made know; then shall be declared the actual wickedness they have been guilty of; then shall appear their secret sins that they have kept hid from the eye of the world; then shall be manifested in their true light those sins that they used to plead for, and to excuse and justify. And then shall all their sins be set forth in all their dreadful aggravations, all their filthiness will be brought to light to their everlasting shame and contempt. Then it shall appear how heinous many of those things were that they in their lifetime made light of; then will it appear how dreadful their guilt is in thus ill-treating so glorious and blessed a Savior. And all the world shall see it, and many shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them. Their companions whom they tempted to wickedness, others whom they have hardened in sin by their example, shall rise up against many of them; and the heathen that have had no advantages in comparison of them, and many of whom have yet lived better lives than they, shall rise up against them, and they shall be called to a special account. The Judge will reckon with them. They shall be speechless, they shall be struck dumb, their own consciences bearing testimony against them, and shall cry aloud against them, for they shall then see how great and terrible a God he is, against whom they have sinned. Then shall they stand at the left hand, while they see others whom they knew on earth sitting at the right hand of Christ in glory, shining forth as the sun, accepted of Christ, and sitting with him to judge and condemn them.

Sixth, then the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced by the Judge upon them. Mat. 25:41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This sentence will be pronounced with awful majesty, and there shall be great indignation, and dreadful wrath shall then appear in the Judge, and in his voice, with which he shall pronounce the sentence. What a horror and amazement

will these words strike into the hearts of the wicked, on whom they shall be pronounced! Every word and syllable shall be like the most amazing thunder to them, and shall pierce their souls like the fiercest lightning. The Judge will bid them depart from him. He will drive them from his presence, as exceedingly abominable to him, and he shall give them the epithet *accursed*. They shall be an accursed company, and he will not only bid them depart from his presence, but into everlasting fire, to dwell there as their only fit habitation. And what shows the dreadfulness of the fire, is, that it is prepared for the devil and his angels. They shall lie forever in the same fire in which the devils, those grand enemies of God, shall be tormented. When this sentence shall be pronounced, there shall be in the vast company at the left hand, tremblings and mourning, and crying, and gnashing of teeth, in a new manner, beyond all that ever was before. If the devils, those proud and lofty spirits, tremble many ages beforehand at the bare thoughts of this sentence, how ill they tremble when it comes to be pronounced! And how, alas, will wicked men tremble! Their anguish will be aggravated by hearing that blessed sentence pronounced on those who shall be at the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Seventh, then the sentence shall be executed. When the Judge bids them depart, they must go; however loth, yet they must go. Immediately upon the finishing of the judgment and the pronouncing of the sentence, will come the end of the world. The frame of this world shall be dissolved. The pronouncing of that sentence will probably be followed with amazing thunders, that shall rend the heavens, and shake the earth out of its place. 2 Pet. 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Then shall the sea and the waves roar, and the rocks shall be thrown down, and the mountains shall rend asunder, and there shall be one universal wreck of this great world. Then shall the heavens be dissolved, and then the earth shall be set on fire. As God in wrath once destroyed the world by a flood of water, so now shall he cause it to be all drowned in a deluge of fire; and the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, 2 Pet. 3:10,

and that great company of devils and wicked men must then enter into those everlasting burnings to which they are sentenced.

Eighth, in this condition they shall remain throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Their punishment shall be then complete, and it shall remain in this completion forever. Now shall all that come upon them which they so long trembled for fear of, while their souls were in a separate state. They will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity. Here they must wear out one thousand years after another, and that without end. There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages. All arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments. This will be their work forever and ever. God shall have no other use or employment for them. This is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height, and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

APPLICATION

I. HENCE what need have we to take care that our foundation for eternity be sure! They who build on a false foundation, are not secure from this misery. They who build up a refuge of lies, will find that their refuge must fail them. Their wall that they have daubed with untempered mortar will fall. The more dreadful the misery is, the more need have we to see that we are safe from it. It will be dreadful indeed to be disappointed in such a case. To please ourselves with dreams and vain imaginations of our being the children of God, and of going to heaven, and at last to awake in hell, to see our refuge swept away, and our hope eternally gone, and to find ourselves swallowed up in flames, and to see and endless duration of it before us. How dreadful will this be!

There will be many that will be thus disappointed. Many shall come to the door and shall find it shut, who expected to find it open, and shall knock, but Christ will tell them that he knows them not, and he will bid them

depart, and it will be in vain for them to tell Christ what affections they have had, and how religious they were, and how well they were accounted of on earth. They shall have no other answer but, “Depart from me, I know you not, ye that work iniquity.” Let us all consider this, and give all diligence, to see that we build sure if by any means we may at last be found in Christ. Let us see to it that we are indeed well secured from this dreadful misery. What will it avail us to please ourselves with a notion of being converted, and being beloved of God. And what will it avail us to have the good opinion of our neighbors for a few days, if we must at last be cast into hell, and appear at the day of judgment at the left hand, and have our eternal portion with unbelievers? A false hope cannot profit us, it is a thousand times worse than none. And who are more miserable than those who think that God has pardoned their sins, and who expect to have a portion with the righteous hereafter, but are all the while going headlong down into this dreadful misery? What case can be more awful than the case of those who are thus led blindfold to the slaughter, promising themselves a happiness that is never like to come, but on the contrary are sinking into endless tribulation and anguish!

Let everyone therefore, who entertains hope of his own state, see to it, that he be well built; and let him not rest in past attainment, but reach forth towards those things that are before with all his might.

II. Hence we derive an argument for the awakening of ungodly men. This indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, is the portion allotted to you if you continue in your present condition. Thou art the man spoken of; it is to thee that all this misery is assigned by the threatening of God’s holy word. It is on thee that this wrath of God abides. Thou art now in a state of condemnation to this misery. John 3:18, “He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” It is not already executed upon you, but you are already condemned to it; you are not merely exposed to condemnation, but you are under the actual sentence of condemnation. This is the portion that is already allotted to you by the law and not under grace. This misery is the misery into which you are everyday in danger of dropping, you are not safe from it one hour. How soon it may come upon you, you know not; you hang over it by a thread, that is continually

growing more and more feeble. This dreadful misery in all its successive parts belongs to you, and is your due. Your friends and your neighbors, and all around you, if they knew what your condition was, might well lift up a loud and bitter cry over you, whenever they behold you, and say, Here is an unhappy being condemned to be given up eternally into the hands of devils to be tormented by them. Here is a miserable man who is in danger every day of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of woe and misery. Here is a wretched undone creature condemned to lie down forever in unquenchable fire, and to dwell in everlasting burnings; and he has no interest in a Savior, he has nothing to defend him, he has nothing wherewith to appease the wrath of an offended God. Here consider two things.

First, you have no reason to question whether those future miseries and torments which are threatened in God's Word are realities. Do not flatter yourself with thinking that it may not be so. Say not, How do I know that there is any such misery to be inflicted in another world; how do I know but all is a fable, and that when I come to die there will be an end of me, and that it will be with me as it is with the beasts. Do not say, How do I know but that all those things are only bugbears of man's inventing. How do I know that the Scriptures, that threaten those things, are the Word of God; or if he has threatened those things, it may be it is only to frighten men to keep them to their duty, it may be he never intends to do as he threatens.

I say that there is no ground for any such suspicion, neither is there any reason for it; for that there should be no future punishment is not only contrary to Scripture, but reason. It is a most unreasonable thing to suppose that there should be no future punishment, to suppose that God, who had made man a rational creature, able to know his duty, and sensible that he is deserving punishment when he does it not; should let man alone, and let him live as he will, and never punish him for his sins, and never make any difference between the good and the bad; that he should make the world of mankind and then let it alone, and let men live all their days in wickedness, in adultery, murder, robbery, and persecution, and the like, and suffer them to live in prosperity, and never punish them; that he should suffer them to prosper in the world far

beyond many good men, and never punish them hereafter. How unreasonable is it to suppose, that he who made the world, should leave things in such confusion, and never take any care of the government of his creatures, and that he should never judge his reasonable creatures! Reason teaches that there is a God, and reason teaches that if there be, he must be a wise and just God, and that he must take care to order things wisely and justly among his creatures. And therefore it is unreasonable to suppose that man dies like a beast, and that there is no future punishment. And if there be a future punishment, it is unreasonable to suppose that God has not somewhere or other given men warning of it, and revealed to them what kind of punishment they must expect. Will a wise lawgiver keep his subjects in ignorance as to what punishment they must expect for breaking his laws? And if God has revealed it, where is it to be found but in the Scripture; what revelation have we of a future state if it is not there revealed? Where does God tell mankind what kind of rewards and punishments they must expect, if not here? And it is abundantly manifest by innumerable evidences, that these threatenings are the threatenings of God, that this awful book is his revelation. And since God has threatened, there is no room to question whether he will fulfill; for he hath said it, yea, he hath sworn it, that he will repay the wicked to his face according to threatenings, and that he will glorify himself in their destruction, and that this heaven and earth shall pass away. How foolish then is the thought that God may only threaten such punishment to frighten men, and that he never intends to execute it! For as surely as God is God, he will do as he has said. He will destroy the mountains of iniquity as he has threatened, and there shall be no escaping. How vain are the thoughts of those who flatter themselves that God will not fulfill his threatenings, and that he only frightens and deceives men in them; as though God could in no other way govern the world than by making use of fallacious tricks and deceits to delude his subjects! Those that entertain such thoughts, however they may harden themselves by them for the present, will cherish them but a little while. Their experience will soon convince them that God is a God of truth, and that his threatenings are no delusions. They will be convinced that he is a God who will by no means clear the guilty, and that his threatenings are substantial, and not mere shadows, when it will be too late to escape them. Deu. 29:18-21, “Lest there should be among you man, or woman,

or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying , I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law." Psa. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

Second, there is no reason to suspect that possibly ministers set forth this matter beyond what it really is, that possibly it is not so dreadful and terrible as is pretended, and that ministers strain the description of it beyond just bounds. Some may be ready to think so, because it seems to them incredible that there should be so dreadful a misery to any creature. But there is no reason for any such thoughts as these, if we consider,

1. How great a punishment the sins of wicked men deserve. The Scripture teaches us that anyone sin deserves eternal death. Rom. 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And that it deserves the eternal curse of God. Deu. 27:26, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, Amen." Gal 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Which things imply that the least sin deserves total and eternal destruction. Eternal death, in the least degree of it, amounts to such a degree of misery as is the perfect destruction of the creature, the loss of all good, and perfect misery; and so does being accursed of God imply it. To be cursed of God, is to be devoted to perfect and ultimate destruction. The Scripture teaches that wicked men shall be punished to their full desert, that they shall pay all the debt.

2. There is no reason to think that ministers describe the misery of the wicked beyond what it is, because the Scripture teaches us that this is one end of ungodly men, to show the dreadfulness and power of God's wrath. Rom. 9:22, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." It is often spoken of as part of the glory of God, that he is a terrible and dreadful God. Psa. 68:35, "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places:" that he is a consuming fire. Psa. 66:3, "How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee:" and that herein one part of the glory of God is represented as consisting, that it is so dreadful a thing to injure and offend God. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, the wrath of a man is sometimes dreadful, but the future punishment of ungodly men is to show what the wrath of God is. It is to show to the whole universe the glory of God's power. 2 Thes. 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And therefore the punishment which we have described is not at all incredible, and there is no reason to think that it has been in the least described beyond what it really is.

3. The Scripture teaches that the wrath of God on wicked men is dreadful beyond all that we can conceive. Psa. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." As it is but little that we know of God, as we know and can conceive of but little of his power and his greatness, so it is but a little that we know or can conceive of the dreadfulness of his wrath. And therefore there is no reason to suppose that we set it forth beyond what it is. We have rather reason to suppose that after we have said our utmost and thought our utmost, all that we have said or thought is but a faint shadow of the reality.

We are taught that the reward of the saints is beyond all that can be spoken or conceived of. Eph. 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." 1 Cor. 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And so we may rationally suppose that the punishment of the wicked will also be inconceivably dreadful.

4. There is no reason to think that we set forth the misery of hell beyond the reality, because the Scripture teaches us that the wrath of God is according to his fear. Psa. 90:11. This passage asserts that the wrath of God is according to his awful attributes; his greatness and his might, his holiness and power. The majesty of God is exceedingly great and awful, but according to his awfulness, so is his wrath. This is the meaning of the words; and therefore we must conclude that the wrath of God is indeed beyond all expressions and signification terrible. How great and awful indeed is his majesty, who has made heaven and earth, and in what majesty will he come to judge the world at the last day! He will come to take vengeance on ungodly men. The sight of this majesty will strike wicked men with apprehensions and fears of destruction.

5. The description which I have given of the tribulation and wrath of ungodly men, is not beyond the truth, for it is the very description which the Scriptures give of it. The Scriptures represent that the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire; not only a fire, but a furnace. Mat. 13:42, “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Rev. 20:15, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.” Psa. 21:8, 9, “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.”

If, therefore, I have described this misery beyond the truth, then the Scriptures have done the same. It is evident then, that there is no reason to flatter yourselves with such imaginations. If God be true, you shall find the wrath of God, and your future misery, full as great; and not only so, but much greater. You will find that we know but little, and have said but little about it, and that all our expressions are faint in comparison of the reality.

III. Hence may be derived an argument to convince wicked men of the justice of God in allotting such a portion to them. Wicked men, when they hear it declared how awful the misery is of which they are in danger, often have their hearts lifted up against God for it. It seems to them very hard for God to deal so with any of his creatures. They cannot see why God should be so very severe with wicked men, for their sin and folly for a

little while in this world. And when they consider that he has threatened such punishments, they are ready to entertain blasphemous thoughts against him. I would therefore endeavor to show you how justly you lie exposed to that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, of which you have heard. Particularly I would show,

First, how just it would be in God forever to leave you to yourself. It would be most just in God to refuse to be with you, or help you.

You have embraced and refused to let go those things which God hates; you have refused to forsake your lusts, and to abandon those ways of sin that are abominable to him. When God has commanded you to forsake them, how have you refused, and still have retained them, and been obstinate in it! Neither is your heart yet to this very day diverted from sin. But it is dear to you, you allow it the best place in your heart, you place it on the throne there. Would it be any wonder therefore if God should utterly leave you, seeing you will not leave sin? God has often declared his hatred of iniquity; and is it any wonder, that he is not willing to dwell with that which is so odious to him? Is it not reasonable that God should insist that you should part with your lusts in order to your enjoying his presence; and seeing you have so long refused, how just would it be if God should utterly forsake you? You have retained and harbored God's mortal enemies, sin and Satan. How justly therefore might God stand at a distance! Is God obliged to be present with any who harbor his enemies, and refuse to forsake them? Would God be unjust, if he should leave you utterly to yourself, so long as you will not forsake your idols?

Consider how just it would be in God to let you alone, since you have let God alone. You have not sought God for his presence and help as you ought to have done; you have neglected him; and would it not therefore be just if he should neglect you? How long have many of you lived in neglecting to seek him? How long have you restrained prayer before him? Since therefore you refused so much as to seek the presence and help of God, and did not think them worth praying to him for, how justly might he forever withhold them, and so leave you wholly to yourself?

You have done what in you lies to drive God away from you, and to cause him wholly to leave you. When God in times past has not let you alone,

but has been unwearied in awakening you, have you not resisted the motions and influences of his Spirit; have you not refused to be conducted by him, or to yield to him? Zec. 7:11, “But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.” How justly therefore might God refuse to move or strive any more! When God has been knocking at your door, you have refused to open to him. How just is it therefore that he should go away, and knock at your door no more! When the Spirit of God has been striving with you, have you not been guilty of grieving the Holy Spirit by giving way to a quarreling temper, and by yielding yourself a prey to lust? And have not some of you quenched the Spirit, and been guilty of backsliding? And is God obliged, notwithstanding all this, to continue the striving of his Spirit with you, to be resisted and grieved still, as long as you please? On the contrary, would it not be just if his Spirit should everlastingly leave you, and let you alone?

Second, how just it would be if you should be cursed in all your concerns in this world. It would be just if God should curse you in everything, and cause everything you enjoy, or are concerned in, to turn to your destruction.

You live here in all the concerns of life as an enemy to God; you have used all your enjoyments and possessions against God, and to his dishonor. Would it not therefore be just if God should curse you in them, and turn them all against you, and to your destruction? What temporal blessing has God given you, which you have not used in the service of your lusts, in the service of sin and Satan? If you have been in prosperity, you have made use of it to God’s dishonor. When you have waxed fat, you have forgotten the God that made you. How just therefore would it be if God’s curse should attend all your enjoyments! Whatsoever employments you have followed, you have not served God in them, but God’s enemies. How just therefore would it be if you should be cursed in all your employments! The means of grace that you have enjoyed, you have not made use of as you ought to have done. You have made light of them, and have treated them in a careless disregardful manner; you have been the worse and not the better for them. You have so attended and used sabbaths, and spiritual opportunities, that you have only made them

occasions of manifesting your contempt of God and Christ, and divine things, by your careless and profane manner of attending them. Would it not therefore be most just that God's curse should attend your means of grace, and the opportunities which you enjoy for the salvation of your soul?

You have improved your time only to heap up provocations and add to your transgressions, in opposition to all the calls and warnings that could be given you. How just therefore would it be if God should turn life itself into a curse to you, and suffer you to live only to fill up the measure of your sins!

You have, contrary to God's counsel, made use of your own enjoyments to the hurt of your soul, and therefore if God should turn to them to the hurt and ruin of your soul, he would but deal with you as you have dealt with yourself. God has earnestly counseled you times without number to use your temporal enjoyments for your spiritual good, but you have refused to hearken to him, you have foolishly perverted them to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, you have voluntarily used what God has given you for your spiritual hurt, to increase your guilt and wound your own soul. And therefore if Gods curse should attend them, so that they should all turn to the ruin of your soul, you would but be dealt with as you have dealt with yourself.

Third, how just would it be in God to cut you off, and put an end to your life!

You have greatly abused the patience and long-suffering of God which have already been exercised towards you. God with wonderful long-suffering has borne with you, when you have gone on in rebellion against him, and refused to turn from your evil ways. He has beheld you going on obstinately in the ways of provocation against him, and yet he has not let loose his wrath against you to destroy you, but has still waited to be gracious. He has suffered you yet to live on his earth, and breathe his air. He has upheld and preserved you, and continued still to feed you, and clothe you, and maintain you, and still to give you a space to repent; but instead of being the better for his patience, you have been the worse, instead of being melted by it, you have been hardened, and it has made

you the more presumptuous in sin. Ecc. 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” You have been guilty of despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, instead of being led to repent by it. You cannot live one day but as God maintains and provides for you; you cannot draw a breath, or live a moment, unless God upholds you. For in his hand your breath is, and he holds your soul in life, and his visitation preserves your spirit. But what thanks has God had of it. How have you, instead of being turned to God, been only rendered the more fully set and dreadfully hardened in the ways of sin! How just therefore would it be if God’s patience should soon be at an end, and he should cease to bear with you any longer!

You have not only abused his past patience, but have also abused his thoughts of future patience. You have flattered yourself that death was not near, and that you should live long in the world, and this has made you abundantly the more bold in sin. Since therefore such has been the use you have made of your expectation of having your life preserved, how just would it be in God to disappoint that expectation, and cut you short of that long life with which you have flattered yourself, and in the thoughts of which you have encouraged yourself in sin against him! How just would it be if your breath should soon be stopped, and that suddenly, when you think not of it, and you should be driven away in your wickedness!

As long as you live in sin you do but cumber the ground, you are wholly unprofitable, and live in vain. He that refuses to live to the glory of God, does not answer the end of his creation, and for what should he live? God made men to serve him; to this end he gave them life. And if they will not devote their lives to this end, how just would it be in God if he should refuse to continue their lives any longer! He has planted you in his vineyard, to bear fruit; and if you bring forth no fruit, why should he continue you any longer? How just would it be in him to cut you down!

As long as you live, many of the blessings of God are spent upon you from day to day; you devour the fruits of the earth and consume much of its fatness and sweetness; and all to no purpose, but to keep you alive to sin against God, and spend all in wickedness. The whole creation does as it

were groan with you. The sun rises and sets to give you light, the clouds pour down rain upon you, and the earth brings forth her fruits, and labors from year to year to supply you. And you in the mean time do not answer the end of Him who has created all things. How just therefore would it be if God should soon cut you off, and take you away, and deliver the earth from this burden, that the creation may no longer groan with you, and cast you out as an abominable branch! Luke 13:7, “Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” John 15:2, 6, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Fourth, how just would it be if you should die in the greatest horror and amazement!

How often have you been exhorted to improve your time, to lay a foundation of peace and comfort on a death-bed; and yet you have refused to hearken! You have been many and many a time reminded that you must die, that it was very uncertain when, and that you did not know how soon, and have been told how mean and insignificant all your earthly enjoyments would then appear, and how unable to afford you any comfort on a deathbed.. You have been often told how dreadful it would be to lie on a death-bed in a Christless state, having nothing to comfort you but your worldly enjoyments. You have been often put in mind of the torment and amazement which sinners, who have misspent their precious time, are subject to when arrested by death. You have been told how infinitely you would then need to have God your friend, and to have the testimony of a good conscience, and a well-grounded hope of future blessedness. And how often have you been exhorted to take care to provide against such a day as this, and to lay up treasure in heaven, that you might have something to depend on when you parted from this world, something to hope for when all things here below fail! But remember how regardless you have been, how dull and negligent from time to time, when you have sat under the hearing of such things, and

still you obstinately refuse to prepare for death, and take no care to lay a good foundation against that time. And you have not only been counseled, but you have seen others on their deathbeds in fear and distress, or have heard of them, and have not taken warning. Yea, some of you have been sick yourselves, and have been afraid that you were on your death-beds, yet God was merciful to you, and restored you, but you did not take warning to prepare for death. How justly therefore might you be the subject of that horror and amazement, of which you have heard, when you come to die!

And not only so, but how industriously have you spent your time in treasuring up matter for tribulation and anguish at that time! You have not only been negligent of laying a foundation for peace and comfort then, but have spent your time continually and unweariedly in laying a foundation for distress and horror. How have you gone on from day to day, heaping up more and more guilt; more and more wounding your own conscience, still increasing the amount of folly and wickedness for you to reflect upon! How just therefore would it be that tribulation and anguish should then come upon you!

Fifth, how just it is that you should suffer the wrath of God in another world!

Because you have willfully provoked and stirred up that wrath. If you are not willing to suffer the anger of God, then why did you provoke him to anger? Why did you act as though you would contrive to make him angry with you? Why did you willfully disobey God? You know that willful disobedience tends to provoke him who is disobeyed; it is so in an earthly king, or master, or father. If you have a servant who is willfully disobedient, it provokes your anger. And again, if you would not suffer God's wrath, why have you so often cast a slight on God? If anyone casts a slight on men, it tends to provoke them. How much more may the Infinite Majesty of heaven be provoked, when he is contemned! You have also robbed God of his property, you have refused to give him that which is his own. It provokes men when they are deprived of their due and they are dealt injuriously by; how much more may God be provoked when you rob him!

You have also slighted the kindness of God to you, and that the greatest love and kindness of which you can conceive. You have been supremely ungrateful, and have only abused that kindness. Nothing provokes men more than to have their kindness slighted and abused. How much more may God be provoked when men requite his infinite mercy only with disobedience and ingratitude! If therefore you go on to provoke God, and to stir up his wrath, how can you expect any other than to suffer his wrath? If then you should indeed suffer the wrath of an offended God, remember it is what you have procured for yourself, it is a fire of your own kindling.

You would not accept of deliverance from God's wrath, when it has been offered to you. When God had in mercy sent his only-begotten Son into the world, you refused to admit him. You loved your sins too well to forsake them to come to Christ, and for the sake of your sins you have rejected all the offers of a Savior, so that you have chosen death rather than life. After you have procured wrath to yourself, you clove fast to it, and would not part with it for mercy. "All they that hate me, love death."

Sixth, how just would it be that you be delivered up into the had of the devil and his angels, to be tormented by them hereafter, seeing you have voluntarily given yourself up to serve them here! You have hearkened to them rather than to God. How just therefore would it be if God leave you to them! You have followed Satan and adhered to his interest in opposition to God, and have subjected yourself to his will in this world, rather than to the will of God. How just therefore would it be if God should give you up to his will hereafter!

Seventh, how justly may your bodies be made organs of torment to you hereafter, which you have made organs and instruments of sin in this world! You have given up your bodies a sacrifice to sin and Satan. How justly therefore may God give them up a sacrifice to wrath! You have employed your bodies as servants to your vile and hateful lusts. How just therefore would it be for God hereafter to raise your bodies to be organs and instruments of misery; and to fill them as full of torment as they have been filled full of sin!

Eighth, but the greatest objection of wicked men against the justice of the

future punishment which God has threatened, is from the greatness of that punishment: that God should inflict upon the finally impenitent, torments so extreme, so amazingly dreadful, to have their bodies cast into a furnace of fire of such immense heat and fierceness, there to lie unconsumed, and yet full of sense and feeling, glowing within and without; and the soul full of yet more dreadful horror and torment; and so to remain without any remedy or rest forever, and ever, and ever. And, therefore, I would mention several things to you, to show how justly you lie exposed to so dreadful a punishment.

1. This punishment, as dreadful as it is, is not more so than the Being is great and glorious against whom you have sinned. It is true this punishment is dreadful beyond all expression or conception, and so is the greatness and gloriousness of God as much beyond all expression or conception; and yet you have continued to sin against him, yea, you have been bold and presumptuous in your sins, and have multiplied transgressions against him without end. The wrath of God that you have heard of, dreadful as it is, is not more dreadful than that Majesty which you have despised and trampled on is awful. This punishment is indeed enough to fill one with horror barely to think of it. And so it would fill you with at least equal horror to think of sinning so exceedingly against so great and glorious a God, if you conceived of it aright. Jer. 2:12, 13, “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord: for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!” God’s being so infinitely great and excellent, has not influenced you not to sin against him, but you have done it boldly, and made nothing of it, thousands of times; and why should this misery, being so infinitely great and dreadful, hinder God from inflicting it on you? 1 Sam. 2:25, “If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?”

2. Your nature is not more averse from such misery as you have heard of, than God’s nature is averse from such sin as you have been guilty of. The nature of man is very averse from pain and torment, and especially it is exceedingly averse from such dreadful and eternal torment. But yet that

does not hinder but that it is just that it should be inflicted, for men do not hate misery more than God hates sin. God is so holy, and is of so pure a nature, that he has an infinite aversion to sin. But yet you have made light of sin, and your sins have been exceedingly multiplied and enhanced. The consideration of God's hating of it has not at all hindered you from committing it. Why, therefore, should the consideration of your hating misery hinder God from bringing it upon you? God represents himself in his word as burdened an wearied with the sins of wicked men. Isa. 1:14. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." Mal. 2:17, "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"

3. You have not cared how much God's honor suffered. And why should God be careful lest your misery be great? You have been told how much these and those things which you have practiced were to the dishonor of God; yet you did not care for that, but went on still multiplying transgressions. The consideration that the more you sinned, the more God was dishonored, did not in the least restrain you. If it had not been for fear of God's displeasure, you would not have cared though you had dishonored him ten thousand times as much as you did. As for any respect you had to God, you did not care what became of God's honor, nor of his happiness neither, no, nor of his being. Why then is God obliged to be careful how much you suffer? Why should he be careful of your welfare, or use any caution lest he should lay more on you than you can bear.

4. As great as this wrath is, it is not greater than that love of God which you have slighted and rejected. God, in infinite mercy to lost sinners, has provided a way for them to escape future misery, and to obtain eternal life. For that end he has given his only-begotten Son, a person infinitely glorious and honorable in himself — being equal with God, and infinitely near and dear to God. It was ten thousand times more than if God had given all the angels in heaven, or the whole world, for sinners. Him he gave to be incarnate, to suffer death, to be made a curse for us, and to undergo the dreadful wrath of God in our room, and thus to purchase for

us eternal glory. This glorious person has been offered to you times without number, and he has stood and knocked at your door, till his hairs were with the dews of the night. But all that he has done has not won upon you. You see no form nor comeliness in him, no beauty that you should desire him. When he has thus offered himself to you as your Savior, you never freely and heartily accept of him. This love which you have thus abused, is as great as that wrath of which you are in danger. If you would have accepted of it, you might have had the enjoyment of this love instead of enduring this terrible wrath. So that the misery you have heard of is not greater than the love you have despised, and the happiness and glory which you have rejected. How just than would it be in God to execute upon you this dreadful wrath, which is not greater than that love which you have despised! Heb. 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

5. If you complain of this punishment as being too great, then why has it not been great enough to deter you from sin? As great as it is, you have made nothing of it. When God threatened to inflict it on you, you did not mind his threatenings, but were bold to disobey him, and to do those very things for which he threatened this punishment. Great as this punishment is, it has not been great enough to keep you from living a willfully wicked life, and going on in ways that you knew were evil. When you have been told that such and such things certainly exposed you to this punishment, you did not abstain on that account, but went on from day to day in a most presumptuous manner, and God's threatening such a punishment was no effectual check upon you. Why therefore do you now complain of this punishment as too great, and quarrel against it, and say that God is unreasonable and cruel to inflict it? In so saying you are condemned out of your own mouth; for if it be so dreadful a punishment, and more than is just, then why was it not great enough at least to retrain you from willful sinning? Luke 19:21, 22, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant," You complain of this punishment as too great, but yet you have acted as if it was not great enough, and you have made light of it. If the punishment is too great, why have you gone on to make it still greater? You have gone on from day to day, to treasure

up wrath against the day of wrath, to add to your punishment, and increase it exceedingly. And yet now you complain of it as too great, as though God could not justly inflict so great a punishment. How absurd and self-contradictory is the conduct of such an one, who complains of God for making his punishment too great, and yet from day to day industriously gathers, and heaps up fuel, to make the fire the greater!

6. You have no cause to complain of the punishment being greater than is just; for you have many and many a time provoked God to do his worst. If you should forbid a servant to do a given thing, and threaten that if he did it you would inflict some very dreadful punishment upon him, and he should do it notwithstanding, and you should renew your command, and warn him in the most strict manner possible not to do it, and tell him you would surely punish him if he persisted, and should declare that his punishment should be exceedingly dreadful, and he should wholly disregard you, and should disobey you again, and you should continue to repeat your commands and warnings ,still setting out the dreadfulness of the punishment, and he should still, without any regard to you, go on again and again to disobey you to your face, and this immediately on your thus forbidding and threatening him: could you take it any otherwise than as daring you to do your worst? But thus have you done towards God. You have had his commands repeated, and his threatenings set before you hundreds of times, and have been most solemnly warned. Yet have you notwithstanding gone on in ways which you knew were sinful, and have done the very things which he has forbidden, directly before his face. Job 15:25, 26, “For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler.” You have thus bid defiance to the Almighty, even when you saw the sword of his vindictive wrath uplifted, that it might fall upon your head. Will it, therefore, be any wonder if he shall make you know how terrible that wrath is, in your utter destruction?

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When the Wicked Shall Have Filled Up the Measure of Their Sin, Wrath Will Come Upon Them to the Uttermost

"To fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." -- **1 Thessalonians 2:16**

Subject: When those that continue in sin have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

In verse 14, the apostle commends the Christian Thessalonians that they became the followers of the churches of God in Judea, both in faith and in sufferings. In *faith*, in that they received the Word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the Word of God. In *sufferings*, in that they had suffered like things of their own countrymen, as *they* had of the Jews. Upon which the apostle sets forth the persecuting, cruel, and perverse wickedness of that people, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have," says he, "persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." Then come in the words of the text; "To fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

In these words we may observe two things:

1. To what effect was the heinous wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, *viz. to fill up their sins*. God hath set bounds to every man's wickedness. He suffers men to live, and to go on in sin, till they have filled up their measure, and then cuts them off. To this effect was the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews. They were exceedingly wicked, and thereby filled up the measure of their sins a great pace. And the reason why they were permitted to be so obstinate under the preaching and miracles of Christ, and of the apostles, and under all the means used with them, was, that

they might fill up the measure of their sins. This is agreeable to what Christ said, Mat. 23:31, 32, “Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”

2. The punishment of their wickedness. “The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” There is a connection between the measure of men’s sin, and the measure of punishment. When they have filled up the measure of their sin, then is filled up the measure of God’s wrath.

The degree of their punishment, is the *uttermost* degree. This may respect both a national and personal punishment. If we take it as a *national* punishment, a little after the time when the epistle was written, wrath came upon the nation of the Jews to the uttermost, in their terrible destruction by the Romans; when, as Christ said, “was great tribulation, such as never was since the beginning of the world to that time,” Mat. 24:21. That nation had before suffered many of the fruits of divine wrath for their sins; but this was beyond all, this was their highest degree of punishment as a nation. If we take it as a *personal* punishment, then it respects their punishment in hell. God often punishes men very dreadfully in this world; but in hell “wrath comes on them to the *uttermost*.” — By this expression is also denoted the *certainty* of this punishment. For though the punishment was then future, yet it is spoken of as present: “The wrath *is* come upon them to the uttermost.” It was as certain as if it had already taken place. God, who knows all things, speaks of things that are not as though they were; for things present and things future are equally certain with him. It also denotes the *near approach* of it. *The wrath IS come; i.e.* it is just at hand; it is at the door; as it proved with respect to that nation; their terrible destruction by the Romans was soon after the apostle wrote this epistle.

DOCTRINE

When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.

I. PROP. There is a *certain measure* that God hath set to the sin of every wicked man. God says concerning the sin of man, as he says to the raging

waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. The measure of some is much greater than of others. Some reprobates commit but a little sin in comparison with others, and so are to endure proportionably a smaller punishment. There are many vessels of wrath; but some are smaller and others greater vessels. Some will contain comparatively but little wrath, others a greater measure of it. Sometimes, when we see men go to dreadful lengths, and become very heinously wicked, we are ready to wonder that God lets them alone. He sees them go on in such audacious wickedness, and keeps silence, nor does anything to interrupt them, but they go smoothly on, and meet with no hurt. But sometimes the reason why God lets them alone is because they have not filled up the measure of their sins. When they live in dreadful wickedness, they are but filling up the measure which God hath *limited* for them. This is sometimes why God suffers very wicked men to live so long; because their iniquity is not full, Gen. 15:16, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." For this reason also God sometimes suffers them to live in prosperity. Their prosperity is a snare to them, and an occasion of their sinning a great deal more. Wherefore God suffers them to have such a snare, because he suffers them to fill up a larger measure. So, for this cause, he sometimes suffers them to live under great light, and great means and advantages, at the same time to neglect and misimprove all. Everyone shall live till he hath filled up his measure.

II. PROP. While men continue in sin, they are filling the measure set them. This is the work in which they spend their whole lives. They begin in their childhood; and if they live to grow old in sin, they still go on with this work. It is the work with which every day is filled up. They may alter their business in other respects. They may sometimes be about one thing and sometimes about another, but they never change from this work of filling up the measure of their sins. Whatever they put their hands to, they are still employed in this work. This is the first thing that they set themselves about when they awake in the morning, and the last thing they do at night. They are all the while treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is a gross mistake of some natural men, who think that when they read and

pray they do not add to their sins. But on the contrary, [they] think they diminish their guilt by these exercises. They think, that instead of adding to their sins, they do something to satisfy for their past offenses. But instead of that, they do but add to the measure by their best prayers, and by those services with which they themselves are most pleased.

III. PROP. When once the measure of their sins is filled up, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost. God will then wait no longer upon them. Wicked men think that God is altogether such a one as themselves, because, when they commit such wickedness, he keeps silence. "Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil." But when once they shall have filled up the measure of their sins, judgment will be executed; God will not bear with them any longer. Now is the day of grace, and the day of patience, which they spend in filling up their sins. But when their sins shall be full, then will come the day of wrath, the day of the fierce anger of God. — God often executes his wrath on ungodly men, in a less degree, in this world. He sometimes brings afflictions upon them, and that in wrath. Sometimes he expresses his wrath in very sore judgments. Sometimes he appears in a terrible manner, not only outwardly, but also in the inward expressions of it on their consciences. Some, before they died, have had the wrath of God inflicted on their souls in degrees that have been intolerable. But these things are only forerunners of their punishment, only slight foretastes of wrath. God never stirs up all his wrath against wicked men while in this world. But when once wicked men shall have filled up the measure of their sins, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; and that in the following respects:

1. Wrath will come upon them without any *restraint* or moderation in the degree of it. God doth always lay, as it were, a restraint upon himself. He doth not stir up his wrath. He stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind. He lets not his arm light down on wicked men with its full weight. But when sinners shall have filled up the measure of their sins, there will be no caution, no restraint. His rough wind will not be stayed nor moderated. The wrath of God will be poured out like fire. He will come forth, not only in anger, but in the fierceness of his anger; he will execute

wrath with power, so as to show what his wrath is, and make his power known. There will be nothing to alleviate his wrath. His heavy wrath will lie on them, without anything to lighten the burden, or to keep off, in any measure, the full weight of it from pressing the soul. — His eye will not spare, neither will he regard the sinner's cries and lamentations, however loud and bitter. Then shall wicked men know that God is the Lord. They shall know how great that majesty is which they have despised, and how dreadful that threatened wrath is which they have so little regarded. Then shall come on wicked men that punishment which they deserve. God will exact of them the uttermost farthing. Their iniquities are marked before him; they are all written in his book. And in the future world he will reckon with them, and they must pay all the debt. Their sins are laid up in store with God. They are sealed up among his treasures; and them he will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms. The consummate degree of punishment will not be executed till the day of judgment. But the wicked are sealed over to this consummate punishment immediately after death; they are cast into hell, and there bound in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day; and they know that the highest degree of punishment is coming upon them. Final wrath will be executed without any mixture. All mercy [and] all enjoyments will be taken away. God sometimes expresses his wrath in this world. But here good things and evil are mixed together. In the future there will be only evil things.

2. Wrath will then be executed without any *merciful* circumstances. The judgments which God executes on ungodly men in this world are attended with many merciful circumstances. There is much patience and long-suffering, together with judgment. Judgments are joined with continuance of opportunity to seek mercy. But in hell there will be no more exercises of divine patience. The judgments which God exercises on ungodly men in this world are warnings to them to avoid greater punishments. But the wrath which will come upon them, when they shall have filled up the measure of their sin, will not be of the nature of warnings. Indeed they will be effectually awakened, and made thoroughly sensible, by what they shall suffer. Yet their being awakened and made sensible will do them no good. Many a wicked man hath suffered very awful things from God in this world, which have been a means of saving good. But that wrath which sinners shall suffer after death will be no way

for their good. God will have no merciful design in it. Neither will it be possible that they should get any good by that or by anything else.

3. Wrath will be so executed, as to perfect the work to which wrath tends, *viz. utterly to undo* the subject of it. Wrath is often so executed in this life, as greatly to distress persons, and bring them into great calamity. Yet not so as to complete the ruin of those who suffer it. But in another world, it will be so executed, as to finish their destruction, and render them utterly and perfectly undone. It will take away all comfort, all hope, and all support. The soul will be, as it were, utterly crushed; the wrath will be wholly intolerable. It must sink, and will utterly sink, and will have no more strength to keep itself from sinking than a worm would have to keep itself from being crushed under the weight of a mountain. The wrath will be so great, so mighty and powerful, as wholly to abolish all manner of welfare, Mat. 21:44, "But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

4. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, that wrath will come upon them which is *eternal*. Though men may suffer very terrible and awful judgments in this world, yet those judgments have an end. They may be long continued, yet they commonly admit of relief. Temporal distresses and sorrows have intermissions and respite, and commonly by degrees abate and wear off. But the wrath that shall be executed, when the measure of sin shall have been filled up, will have no end. Thus it will be to the uttermost as to its duration. It will be of so long continuance, that it will be impossible it should be longer. Nothing can be longer than eternity.

5. When persons shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost of what is *threatened*. Sin is an infinite evil; and the punishment which God hath threatened against it is very dreadful. The threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity are very awful; but these threatenings are never fully accomplished in this world. However dreadful things some men may suffer in this life, yet God never fully executes his threatenings for so much as one sin, till they have filled up the whole measure. The threatenings of the law are never answered by anything that any man suffers here. The most awful judgment in this life doth not answer God's threatenings, either in

degree, or in circumstances, or in duration. If the greatest sufferings that ever are endured in this life should be eternal, it would not answer the threatening. Indeed temporal judgments *belong* to the threatenings of the law; but these are not *answered* by them; they are but foretastes of the punishment. “The wages of sin is death.” No expression of wrath that are suffered before men have filled up the measure of their sin are its full wages. But *then*, God will reckon with them, and will recompense into their bosoms the full deserved sum.

APPLICATION

The use I would make of this doctrine is, of warning to natural men, to rest no longer in sin, and to make haste to flee from it. The things which have been said, under this doctrine, may well be awakening, awful considerations to you. It is awful to consider whose wrath it is that abides upon you, and of what wrath you are in danger. It is impossible to express the misery of a natural condition. It is like being in Sodom, with a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone hanging over it, just ready to break forth, and to be poured down upon it. The clouds of divine vengeance are full, and just ready to burst. Here let those who yet continue in sin, in this town, consider particularly,

1. Under what *great means* and advantages you continue in sin. God is now favoring us with very great and extraordinary means and advantages, in that we have such extraordinary tokens of the presence of God among us. His Spirit is so remarkably poured out, and multitudes of all ages, and all sorts, are converted and brought home to Christ. God appears among us in the most extraordinary manner, perhaps, that ever he did in New England. The children of Israel saw many mighty works of God, when he brought them out of Egypt. But we at this day see works more mighty, and of a more glorious nature.

We who live under such light, have had loud calls; but now above all. Now is a day of salvation. The fountain hath been set open among us in an extraordinary manner, and hath stood open for a considerable time. Yet you continue in sin, and the calls that you have hitherto had have not brought you to be washed in it. What extraordinary advantages have you lately enjoyed to stir you up! How hath everything in the town, of late,

been of tendency! Those things which used to be the greatest hindrances have been removed. You have not the ill examples of immoral persons to be a temptation to you. There is not now that vain worldly talk, and ill company, to divert you, and to be a hindrance to you, which there used to be. Now you have multitudes of good examples set before you. There are many now all around you, who, instead of diverting and hindering you, are earnestly desirous of your salvation, and willing to do all that they can to move you to flee to Christ. They have a thirsting desire for it. The chief talk in the town has of late been about the things of religion, and has been such as hath tended to promote, and not to hinder, your souls' good. Everything all around you hath tended to stir you up; and will you yet continue in sin?

Some of you have continued in sin till you are far advanced in life. You were warned when you were children; and some of you had awakenings then. However, the time went away. You became men and women; and then you stirred up again, you had the strivings of God's Spirit. And some of you have fixed the times when you would make thorough work of seeking salvation. Some of you perhaps determined to do it when you should be married and settled in the world; others when you should have finished such a business, and when your circumstances should be so and so altered. Now these times have come, and are past; yet you continue in sin.

Many of you have had remarkable warnings of providence. Some of you have been warned by the deaths of near *relations*. You have stood by, and seen others die and go into eternity; yet this hath not been effectual. Some of you have been near death *yourselves*, have been brought nigh the grave in sore sickness, and were full of your promises how you would behave yourselves, if it should please God to spare your lives. Some of you have very narrowly escaped death by dangerous accidents; but God was pleased to spare you, to give you a further space to repent; yet you continue in sin.

Some of you have seen times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God, in this town, in times past; but it had no good effect on you. *You* had the strivings of the Spirit of God too, as well as others. God did not so pass by your door, but that he came and knocked; yet you stood it out.

Now God hath come again in a more remarkable manner than ever before, and hath been pouring out his Spirit for some months, in its most gracious influence; yet you remain in sin until now. In the beginning of this awakening, you were warned to flee from wrath and to forsake your sins. You were told what a wide door there was open, what an accepted time it was, and were urged to press into the kingdom of God. And many did press in; they forsook their sins, and believed in Christ. *But you, when you had seen it, repented not, that you might believe him*.

Then you were warned again, and still others have been pressing and thronging into the kingdom of God. Many have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on Christ; yet you continue in sin and unbelief. You have seen multitudes of all sorts, of all ages, young and old, flocking to Christ, and many of about your age and your circumstances. But you still are in the same miserable condition in which you used to be. You have seen persons daily flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows. God hath not only poured out his Spirit on this town, but also on other towns around us, and they are flocking in there, as well as here. This blessing spreads further and further; many, far and near, seem to be setting their faces Zionward. Yet you who live here, where this work first began, continue behind still; you have no lot or portion in this matter.

2. How *dreadful* the wrath of God is, when it is executed to the uttermost. To make you in some measure sensible of that, I desire you to consider whose wrath it is. The wrath of a king is the roaring of a lion; but this is the wrath of Jehovah, the Lord God Omnipotent. Let us consider, what can we rationally think of it? How dreadful must be the wrath of such a Being, when it comes upon a person to the uttermost, without any pity, or moderation, or merciful circumstances! What must be the uttermost of his wrath, who made heaven and earth by the word of his power; who spake, and it was done, who commanded, and it stood fast! What must his wrath be, who commandeth the sun, and it rises not, and sealeth up the stars! What must his wrath be, who shaketh the earth out of its place, and causeth the pillars of heaven to tremble! What must his wrath be, who rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, who removeth the mountains out of their places, and overturneth them in his anger! What must his wrath be, whose majesty is so awful, that no man could live in the sight of

it! What must the wrath of such a Being be, when it comes to the uttermost, when he makes his majesty appear and shine bright in the misery of wicked men! And what is a worm of the dust before the fury and under the weight of this wrath, which the stoutest devils cannot bear, but utterly sink, and are crushed under it. — Consider how dreadful the wrath of God is sometimes in this world, only in a little taste or view of it. Sometimes, when God only enlightens conscience, to have some sense of his wrath, it causes the stout-hearted to cry out. Nature is ready to sink under it, when indeed it is but a little glimpse of divine wrath that is seen. This hath been observed in many cases. But if a slight taste and apprehension of wrath be so dreadful and intolerable, what must it be, when it comes upon persons to the uttermost! When a few drops or little sprinkling of wrath is so distressing and overbearing to the soul, how must it be when God opens the flood-gates, and lets the mighty deluge of his wrath come pouring down upon men's guilty heads, and brings in all his waves and billows upon their souls! How little of God's wrath will sink them! Psa. 2:12, "When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

3. Consider, you know not what wrath God may be about to execute upon wicked men in *this world*. Wrath may, in some sense, be coming upon them, in the present life, to the uttermost, for ought we know. When it is said of the Jews, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," respect is had, not only to the execution of divine wrath on that people in hell, but that terrible destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, which was then near approaching, by the Romans. We know not but the wrath is now coming, in some peculiarly awful manner, on the wicked world. God seems, by the things which he is doing among us, to be coming forth for some great thing. The work which hath been lately wrought among us is no ordinary thing. He doth not work in his usual way, but in a way very extraordinary; and it is probable, that it is a forerunner of some very great revolution. We must not pretend to say what is in the womb of providence, or what is in the book of God's secret decrees; yet we may and ought to discern the signs of these times.

Though God be now about to do glorious things for his church and people, yet it is probable that they will be accompanied with dreadful

things to his enemies. It is the manner of God, when he brings about any glorious revolution for his people, at the same time to execute very awful judgments on his enemies, Deu. 32:43, “Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.” Isa. 3:10, 11, “Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Isa. 65:13, 14, “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.” We find in Scripture, that where glorious times are prophesied to God’s people, there are at the same time awful judgments foretold to his enemies. What God is now about to do, we know not. But this we may know, that there will be no safety to any but those who are in the ark. — Therefore it behooves all to haste and flee for their lives, to get into a safe condition, to get into Christ. Then they need not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: for God will be their refuge and strength; they need not be afraid of evil tidings; their hearts may be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

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Sinners in Zion Tenderly Warned

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" **-- *Isaiah* 33:14**

Subject: The time will come when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion; because they will know that they are going to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer forever and ever, and which none can endure.

SECTION I

Showing who are sinners in Zion.

There are two kinds of persons among God's professing people. The one, those who are truly godly, spoken of in the verse following the text, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly," etc. The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men, awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly. Then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the sinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of verse 17. And then in the latter part of verse 17. and in verse 18 and 19 are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion. Then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In verse 10, it is said, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself," *i.e.* Now will I arise to execute wrath upon the ungodly. I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honor. "Now will I be exalted." Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate

the honor of my own majesty. I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. “Now will I lift up myself.” Now I will no longer have mine honor trampled in the dust by them. But my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In verse 11, the prophet proceeds, “Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble,” *i.e.* Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it. You are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it. It brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble, which is alluded to here. And therefore it is added, “Your breath, as fire, shall devour you.” *i.e.* Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verse 12, “And the people shall be as the burnings of lime.” As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime, so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God’s wrath. “As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire.” As briers and thorns are the encumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt, so shall it be with the wicked that are among God’s people, and grow in God’s field. Heb. 6:7, 8, “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

Then it follows in verse 13, “Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might.” This implies that God will by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and of those that are far off. “Acknowledge my might.” Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful, that it will be a

manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute such misery; agreeable to Rom. 9:22, “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

Next follow these words: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” The sense is, That the time will come, when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion, because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer forever and ever, and which none can endure.

It may be inquired, who are the sinners in Zion? — I answer, that they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church. And the church of God in Scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners. Christ’s flock is, and ever hath been, but a little flock. And the sinners of the *world* are of two sorts: those who are visibly of Satan’s kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church; and those who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in *Zion*. Both are the objects of the displeasure and wrath of God. But his wrath is more especially manifested in Scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant by *hypocrites*. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites. For they make a profession of the true religion. They attend God’s ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God. But all is hypocrisy.

SECTION II

How fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

I. They will hereafter be *afraid*. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure. Nothing will awaken them. The most awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid, though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them, though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general out-pouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God. However senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

II. They will be *surprised* with fear. This seems to imply two things; *viz.* the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

First, the *greatness* of their fear. Surprise argues a high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now. They now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed *convinced* that there is such a place as hell. But they are *afraid* there is. They are not thoroughly awakened. Neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences. But they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any through endeavors to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more, than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror. They will be horribly afraid and terrors will take hold on them as water. Thus we read of *their fear coming as a desolation, and of*

distress and anguish coming upon them; Pro. 1:27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that *trouble and anguish shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.* Job 15:24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale. They will appear with amazement in their countenances. Every joint in them will tremble. All their bones will shake and their knees will smite one against another. Nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear, and from rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

Second, they will be *suddenly* seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them, far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the TIME when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear.

1. It is often so on a *death-bed.* Many things pass in their lifetime, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls, as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state. How much or their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains. Also how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But these things do not terrify them. As age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has great hope that he shall

recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity, when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavors of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees, by the countenance and behavior of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death-sweat; and when perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is a dying: — then how does fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion! How does his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick. But till now he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak. Or if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper. And he hoped that they would be effectual. And when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new. Then the sinner hoped *that* would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him, and he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also, that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him. And he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how does his heart sink and die within him! How does he look about with a freighted countenance! How quick is the motion of his eye, through inward fear! And how quick and sudden are all his motions! What a frightful hurry does he seem to be in! How does forever look to him when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope. He is loth to believe what is told him. He tells his informers that he hopes they are more affrighted than they need be. He hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause. And, like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He has been hoping, but his hopes are all dashed. He sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how shall he go out of the world? He knows he has no interest in Christ. His sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him. And he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! now he is a dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him? whether any light appear? whether God have not given him some token of his favor? And he answers, No, with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if able to speak at all. Or if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, and hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, of his soul? Some who, in such circumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity! eternity!* and some, *O! a thousand worlds for an inch of time! O! if they might but live a little while longer!* But it must not be. Go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just a going. For sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Savior, or the lest testimony of divine mercy. I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless

souls in these moments, none can tell. Nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is *yet to come*. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a world, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that has been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who had mocked Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that [tore] them in pieces; I say if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils those roaring lions, which then seize of it!

And when the soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the apprehensions of what shall *yet remain*. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the wretched soul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, tremble at the thoughts of that *greater* torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They have already more than they will be able to bear. How then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented!

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and

lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel already, and know *certainly,* that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the judge, to receive the dreadful sentence. And that then, in soul and body, they must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred-fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the *last judgment*. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, *when* it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks. And when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves, and shall see the judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that of which we can have any idea. But that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will. Let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned. Let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself. When he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit. It will loose the joints of his loins. It will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of an

enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their judge. It will make their teeth to chatter, and make them fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment-seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death. But in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great judge. And when they come to stand before the judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. They will they stand in a trembling, expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ. They will have a horrible expectation of that sentence. And what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of its hearing? They cannot shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the judge. And it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time. But the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject, who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence. But they will all sink under it.

Lastly, fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven. And soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness.

That fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shaking of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the center of the earth, it will be in vain. For it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion.

SECTION III

Why sinners in general will hereafter be surprised with fear.

I. Fearfulness will surprise them because they will know that they are to be cast into *devouring fire*. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery than to think of being cast alive into a great fire, especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a *fire*, but into *devouring* fire; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire*. Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of materials into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire,* as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace, and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make everything cast

into it all over white and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him?

In some heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness?

The flames of a very great fire, as when a house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God. Such is the rage of the flames. And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part. And the reason is because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," 2 Pet. 3:10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire, so that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an *image* of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their *souls*. We read in Rev. 19:15 of "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said of the wrath of God that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said the wrath of God,

but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of *Almighty* God. O what is that! the fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence! of a being of infinite strength! What an idea does that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts when they see this about to be executed upon them?

II. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is that they will be sensible this devouring fire will be *everlasting*. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer torment but for *one minute*, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire much fiercer, the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! And if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for a hundred ages, nor for a million of ages, one after another, but *forever and ever*; without any end, and never, never be delivered!

They shall know that the fire itself will be *everlasting fire*, a fire that never shall be quenched. Mark 9:43, 44, "To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end, Rev. 14:10, 11. They shall know that they shall forever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eves, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall forever be full of glowing melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements. And also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest mountains, will never cease to roll over them, following one another *forever and ever*.

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is. And indeed none can comprehend it. It swallows up all thought and imagination. If we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings! This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

III. The third reason given in the text why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment is that they will know they shall *not be able to bear it*. When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames. For they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them. They will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views, their hearts will utterly fail them. Their hands will not be strong, nor can their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness, and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these: O! what shall I do? How shall I bear the torments of this fire? How can I endure them? Who can endure? Where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this? O! what shall I do? Must I be cast in thither? I cannot bear it. I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing! How can I endure it one moment? How much less can I endure it forever and ever! And must I bear it forever? What! forever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal contentions and shrieks, and shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness will then surprise the wicked.

SECTION IV

Why it will be especially thus with sinners in Zion, who dwell among God's visible people.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between *sinners in Zion* and other sinners; a great difference between the most pointed hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked heathens. But it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies of God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life and the speeches which he made when upon earth. There you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles. There you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion, or hypocrites, that are always in Scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath. Isa. 10:6, "I will send him against a hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil." — The reasons are chiefly these:

I. That they sin against so much *greater light*. This is often spoken of in Scripture as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is

in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin. But then they see, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John 9:14. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness! And when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

II. That they sin against such *professions and vows*. The heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples. They never came under any covenant-obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

III. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them. They have the dying love of Christ represented to them. They have this mercy, this glorious Savior, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them. They have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls. A great price is put into their hands to this end. They have that precious treasure, the Holy Scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace. But all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers mercies, and invitations, they abuse, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath. — Sinners in Zion, beside their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second. He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, at which they stumble and fall. And there is no fall like this. The fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

SECTION V

An earnest exhortation to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You have often been exhorted to fly from the "wrath to come." This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are *the wrath to come*. You hear of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter. And O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nearer every day. Those fierce flames are already kindled in the wrath of God. Yea, the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you. It is ready for you. That pit is prepared for you with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark to that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to put out his Spirit upon us. And he is doing great things amongst us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who has since, for our sins, departed from us, left us so long in so dull and dead a state, and has let sinners alone in their sins, so that there have been scarcely any sins to be seen of any such work as conversion. That same God is now come again. He is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvelous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan. He saves persons from the devouring fire. He plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings. He opens the prison-doors and knocks off their chains and

brings out poor prisoners. He is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God has again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he has set open a wide door, and he stands in the door-way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion: Come, saith he, come, fly from the wrath to come. Here is a refuge for you. Fly hither for refuge. Lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it has been for some years past, almost all of you would surely have gone to hell. In a little time fearfulness would have surprised you and you would have been cast into that devouring fire and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity. And blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done if you had died before it came? How doleful would your case have been ! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve it? Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ. And will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer forever in the lake of fire? Hereafter you will see those of your neighbors and acquaintance who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord. And if you remain unconverted, you at the same time will be surprised with fear and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, who will be the subjects of that very

misery of which we have now heard, although it be eternal! There are probably some now reading or hearing this discourse, who shall be seen at the day of judgment, among the devils, at the left hand of the judge, with freighted, ghastly countenances, wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, nor where to look for them. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts, and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one hopes to go to heave. None would by any means miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble forever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest. Let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colors as you will, they will be slack and slothful. And they will never be likely to obtain heaven while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels. Hell, that follows after, will overtake them. And a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking will hold out. Some will backslide. They will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady. They are not to be trusted. Men are very short-winded. They cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God. They are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once. But they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will begin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in

duty. They will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict. They will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things. They see into but they may practice them without any great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will by degrees lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek. But when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still. They are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings, in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened. And God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now in a natural condition, are doubtless near death. They have not long to live in the world. And if they seek in a dull way, or if, after they have sought for a while, they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other. But death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hope of seeing another such time seven years hence? Alas! how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed!

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own souls' salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it is given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it. As we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are

very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As to those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also, now that God is giving you one more such opportunity. If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity has so hardened you, and has been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind. And will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Num. 14:22, 23, “Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.” Together with verse 31, “But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.”

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Men Naturally are God's Enemies

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." -- **Romans 5:10**

Subject: Natural men are God's enemies.

The apostle, from the beginning of the epistle, to the beginning of this chapter, had insisted on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In this chapter he goes on to consider the benefits that are consequent on justification, viz. Peace with God, present happiness, and hope of glory. Peace with God is mentioned in the first verse, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the following verses he speaks of present blessedness, and hope of glory, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." — And concerning this benefit, the hope of glory, the apostle particularly takes notice of two things, viz. the blessed nature of this hope, and the sure ground of it.

I. He insists on the *blessed nature* of this hope, in that in enables us to glory in tribulations. This excellent nature of true Christian hope is described in the following words (verses 3-5), "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." As if he had said, through hope of a blessed reward, that will abundantly more than make up for all *tribulation*, we are enabled to bear tribulation with *patience*; patiently bearing, and patiently waiting for the reward. And patience works *experience*; for when we thus bear tribulation with patient waiting for the reward, this brings experience of the earnest of the reward, viz. the earnest of the Spirit, in our feeling the love of God shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost. So that our hope does not make us ashamed: it is not disappointed; for in the midst of our tribulation, we experience those blessed incomes of the Spirit in our souls, that make even a time of tribulation sweet to us; and is such an earnest abundantly confirms our hope; and so experience works hope.

II. The apostle takes notice of the *sure ground* there is for this hope; or the abundant evidence we have, that we shall obtain the glory hoped for, in that peace we have with God, by our justification through Christ's blood. For while we were without strength, in due time Christ died for us; even while we were ungodly and sinners, enemies to God and Christ (See verses 6-10). The apostle's argument is exceeding clear and strong. If God has done already so great a thing for us, as to give us Christ to die and shed his precious blood for us, which was vastly the greatest thing, we need not doubt but that he will bestow life upon us. It is but a small thing for God actually to bestow eternal life, after it is purchased; to what it is for him to give his own Son to die, in order to purchase it. The giving Christ to purchase it, was virtually all. It included the whole grace of God in salvation. When Christ had purchased salvation at such a dear rate, all the difficulty was got through, all was virtually over and done. It is a small thing, in comparison, for God to bestow salvation, after it has been thus purchased at a full price. Sinners who are justified by the death of Christ, are already virtually saved. The thing is, as it were, done. What remains is no more than the necessary consequence of what is done. Christ when he died made an end of sin. And when he rose from the dead, he did virtually rise with the elect. He brought them up from death with him, and ascended into heaven with them. And therefore, when this is already done, and we are thus reconciled to God through the death of his Son, we need not fear but that we shall be saved by his life. The love of God appears much more in his giving his Son to die for sinners, that in giving eternal life after Christ's death.

The giving of Christ to die for us is here spoken of as a much greater thing, than the actual bestowment of life; because this is all that has any difficulty in it. — When God did this for us, he did it for us as sinners and enemies. But in actually bestowing salvation on us after we are justified, we are not looked upon as sinners, but as perfectly righteous persons. He

beholds no iniquity in us. We are no more enemies, but reconciled. When God gave Christ to die for the elect, he looked on them as they are in themselves; but in actually bestowing eternal life, he looks on them as they are in Christ.

There are *three* epithets used in the text and context, as appertaining to sinners as they are in themselves, verse 6-8.

They are *without strength*, they cannot help themselves. — They are *ungodly* or sinners, — and they are *enemies*. As in the text. — NATURAL MEN ARE GOD'S ENEMIES.

God, though the Creator of all things, yet has some enemies in the world. — Men in general will own that they are sinners. There are few, if any, whose consciences are so blinded as not to be sensible [that] they have been guilty of sin. And most sinners will own that they have bad hearts. They will own that they do not love God so much as they should do; that they are not so thankful as they ought to be for mercies; and that in many things they fail. And yet few of them are sensible that they are God's enemies. They do not see how they can be truly so called; for they are not sensible that they wish God any hurt, or endeavor to do him any.

But we see that the Scripture speaks of them as enemies to God. So in our text, and elsewhere, "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works," Col. 1:21. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. 8:7. — And that all natural or unregenerate men are indeed such, is what I shall endeavor now particularly to show. Which I propose to do in the following method. Particularly — In what respects they are enemies to God — To how great a degree they are enemies — And why they are enemies. Then I shall answer some objections.

SECTION I

In what respects natural men are God's enemies.

1. THEIR enmity appears in their judgments, their natural relish, their wills, affections, and practice. They have a very mean esteem of God. Men are ready to entertain a good esteem of those with whom they are friends.

They are apt to think highly of their qualities, to give them their due praises; and if there be defects, to cover them. But of those to whom they are enemies, they are disposed to have mean thoughts. They are apt to entertain a dishonorable opinion of them. They will be ready to look contemptibly upon anything that is praiseworthy in them.

So it is with natural men towards God. They entertain very low and contemptible thoughts of God. Whatever honor and respect they may pretend, and make a show of towards God, if their practice be examined, it will show, that they certainly look upon him as a Being that is but little to be regarded. The language of their hearts is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Exo. 5:2. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Job 21:15. They count him worthy neither to be loved nor feared. They dare not behave with that slight and disregard towards one of their fellow-creatures, when a little raised above them in power and authority, as they dare, and do, towards God. They value one of their equals much more than God, and are ten times more afraid of offending such, than of displeasing the God that made them. They cast such exceeding contempt on God, as to prefer every vile lust before him. And every worldly enjoyment is set higher in their esteem than God. A morsel of meat, or a few pence of worldly gain, is preferred before him. God is set last and lowest in the esteem of natural men.

2. They are enemies in the *natural relish* of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God; yet from what they hear they of him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature, they do not like him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like him upon this account; they have no relish of such qualifications. They take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate those attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness, in them. And on account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all his other attributes. They have greater aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all

things; and because his omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he never will be otherwise than he is, an infinitely holy God.

It is from this disrelish that natural men have of the attributes of God, that they do not love to have much to do with God. The natural tendency of the heart of man is to fly from God, and keep at a distance from him, as far off as possible. — A natural man is averse to communion with God, and is naturally disinclined to those exercises of religion, wherein he has immediately to do with him. It is said of wicked men, Psa. 10:4, "God is not in all their thoughts." It is evident, that the mind of man is naturally averse to thinking about God. And hence if any thoughts of him be suggested to the mind, they soon go away. Such thoughts are not apt to rest in the minds of natural men. If anything is said to them of God, they are apt to forget it. It is like seed that falls upon the hard path, the fowls of the air soon take it away: or like seed that falls upon a rock. Other things will stick; but divine things rebound. And if they were cast into the mind, they meet with that there which soon thrusts them out again. They meet with no suitable entertainment, but are soon chased away.

Hence also it is, that natural men are with difficulty persuaded to be constant in the duty of secret prayer. They would not be so averse to spending a quarter of an hour, night and morning, in some bodily labor; but it is because they are averse to a work, wherein they have so immediately to do with God; and they naturally love to keep at a distance from him.

3. Their *wills* are contrary to his will. God's will and theirs are exceeding cross the one to the other. God wills those things that they hate, and are most averse to; and they will those things that God hates. Hence they oppose God in their wills. There is a dreadful, violent, and obstinate opposition, of the will of natural men to the will of God.

They are very opposite to the commands of God. It is from the enmity of the will (Rom. 8:7), that "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence natural men are enemies to God's

government. They are not loyal subjects, but enemies to God, considered as Lord of the world. They are entire enemies to God's authority.

4. They are enemies to God in their *affections*. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God. And it often dreadfully breaks forth. Though it may in great measure lie hid in secure times, when God lets men alone, and they meet with no great disturbance of body or mind; yet, if God does but touch men in their consciences, by manifesting to them a little of his wrath for their sins, this oftentimes brings out the principle of malice against him. This is exercised in dreadful heart-risings, inward wranglings and quarrelings, and blasphemous thoughts; wherein the heart is like a viper, hissing and spitting poison at God. And however free from it the heart may seem to be, when let alone and secure, yet a very little thing will set it in a rage. Temptations will show what is in the heart. The alteration of a man's circumstances will often discover the heart. Pharaoh had no more natural enmity against God than other men; and if other natural men had been in Pharaoh's circumstances, the same corruptions would have put forth themselves in as dreadful a manner. The scribes and Pharisees had naturally no more malice in their hearts against Christ than other men, and other natural men would, in their case, and having as little restraint, exercise as much malice against Christ as they did. When wicked men come to be cast into hell, then their malice against God will appear. Then their hearts will appear as full of malice, as hell is full of fire. But when wicked men come to be in hell, there will be no new corruptions put into their heart; but only old ones will then break forth without restraint. That is all the difference between a wicked man on earth, and a wicked man in hell, that in hell there will be more to stir up the exercise of corruption, and less to restrain it, than on earth. But there will be no new corruption put in. A wicked man will have no principle of corruption in hell, but what he carried to hell with him. There are now the seeds of all the malice that will be exercised then. The malice of damned spirits is but a branch of the root that is in the hearts of natural men now. A natural man has a heart like the heart of a devil; only corruption is more under restraint in man than in devils.

5. They are enemies in their *practice*. *They walk contrary to him*. In their enmity against God, they are exceeding active. They are engaged in war

against God. Indeed they cannot injure God [for] he is so much above them; but yet they do what they can. They oppose themselves to his honor and glory. They oppose themselves to the interest of his kingdom in the world. They oppose themselves to the will and command of God. And [they] oppose him in his government. They oppose God in his works, and in his declared designs; while he is doing one work, they are doing the contrary. God seeks one thing, and they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers in opposing the kingdom of God.

SECTION II

The degree of men's natural enmity to God.

I NOW proceed to say something with respect to the *degree* of this enmity: tending in some measure to show, how great enemies to God are natural men.

1. They have *no love* to God; their enmity is mere enmity without any mixture of love. A natural man is wholly destitute of any principle of love to God, and therefore never had the least exercise of this love. Some natural men have better tempers than others; and some are better educated than others; and some live a great deal more soberly than others. But one has no more love to God than another; for none have the least spark of that. The heart of a natural man is as destitute of love to God, as a dead, stiff, cold corpse is of vital heat. John 5:42, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

2. Every *faculty* and *principle* of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. The nature of man is wholly infected with this enmity against God. He is tainted with it throughout, in all his faculties and principles. And not only so, but every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved to it. This enmity against God, has the absolute possession of the man. The apostle Paul, speaking of what he was naturally, says, Rom. 7:14, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

The *understanding* is under the reigning power of this enmity against God, so that it is entirely darkened and blinded with regard to the glory

and excellency of God. The *will* is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the *affections* are governed by enmity against God. There is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast, is full of poison.

3. The power of the enmity of natural men against God, is so great, that it is *insuperable* by any *finite* power. It has too great and strong a possession of the heart, to be overcome by any created power. Indeed, a natural man never sincerely strives to root out his enmity against God. His endeavors are hypocritical. He delights in his enmity, and chooses it. Neither can others do it, though they sincerely, and to their utmost, endeavor to overcome this enmity. If godly friends and neighbors labor to persuade them to cast away their enmity, and become friends to God, they cannot persuade them to it. Though ministers use never so many arguments and entreaties, and set forth the loveliness of God; tell them of the goodness of God to them, hold forth God's own gracious invitations, and entreat them never so earnestly to cast off their opposition, and be reconciled; yet they cannot overcome it. Still they will be as bad enemies to God, as ever they were. — The tongue of men or of angels cannot persuade them to relinquish their opposition to God. Miracles will not do it. — How many miracles did the children of Israel see in the wilderness! Yet their enmity against God remained; as appeared by their often murmuring. And how often did Christ use miracles to this end without effect, but the Jews obstinately stood out. Mat. 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And how great did the enmity of these people appear to be after all; how spiteful and venomous were their hearts towards Christ, as appears by their cruel treatment of him, in his last sufferings!

4.. They are *mortal* enemies to God; i.e. they have that enmity in their hearts, that strikes at the life of God. A man maybe no friend to another, and may have an ill spirit towards him; and yet not be his mortal enemy. His enmity will be satisfied with something short of the death of the

person. But it is not so with natural men, with respect to God. They are mortal enemies. Their imbecility is no argument that this is not the tendency of the principle.

Natural men are enemies to the dominion of God; and their nature shows their good-will to dethrone him if they could! Yea, they are enemies to the being of God, and would be glad if there was no God. And therefore it necessarily follows, that they would cause that there should be none, if they could. Psa. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." This implies, not only an aptness to question the being of God; but, that he inclines it should be so. His *heart* says, i.e. his *inclination* says. The words in the original are, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." That is, I would have none, I do not desire any, I wish there was none; that would suit my inclination best. Let the world be emptied of a God, he stands in my way. And hence he is an atheist in his heart.

The viper's poison is deadly poison; and when he bites he seeks the precious life. And men are in this respect a generation of vipers. Their poison, which is enmity against God, seeks the life of God. Mat. 3:7, "O generation of vipers." Psa. 58:3-4, "The wicked are estranged from the womb — Their poison is like the poison of a serpent." Deu. 32:32-33, "For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are the grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their vine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." The divine nature being immortal, and infinitely out of our reach, there is no other trial possible, whether the enmity that is naturally in the heart against God, be mortal or no, but only for God to take on him the human nature, and become man; so as to come within man's reach. There can be no other experiment. And what has been the event? Why, when once God became man, and came down to dwell here, among such vipers as fallen men, they hated and persecuted him; and never desisted till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. There was a multitude of them that appeared combined in this design. Nothing would do, but he must be put to death. All cry out, *Crucify him, crucify him. Away with him*. They had rather Barabbas who greatly deserved death, should live, than he should not die. Nothing would restrain them from it; even all his preaching, and all his miracles. But they would kill him. And it was not the ordinary kind of

execution that would satisfy them; but it must be the most cruel and most ignominious they possibly could invent. And they aggravated it as much as they could, by mocking him, and spitting on him, and scourging him. This shows what the nature and tendency of man's enmity against God is; here it appeared in its true colors.

5. Natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being whatsoever. Natural men may be very great enemies to their fellow-creatures; but not so great as they are to God. There is no other being that so much stands in sinners' way, in those things that they chiefly set their hearts upon, as God. Men are wont to hate their enemies in proportion to two things, viz. their opposition to what they look upon to be their interest, — and their power and ability. A great and powerful enemy will be more hated, than one who is weak and impotent. But none is so powerful as God.

Man's enmity to others may be got over. Time may wear it out, and they may be reconciled. But natural men, without a mighty work of God to change their hearts, will never get over their enmity against God. They are greater enemies to God than they are to the devil. Yea, they treat the devil as their friend and master, and join with him against God. John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning."

SECTION III

On what account men are enemies to God.

THE general reason is, that God is opposite to them in the worship of their idols. The apostasy of man summarily consists in departing from the true God, to idols; forsaking his Creator, and setting up other things in his room. When God at first created man, he was united to his Creator; the God that made him was his God. The true God was the object of his highest respect, and had the possession of his heart. Love to God was the principle in his heart, that rules over all other principles; and every thing in the soul was wholly in subjection to it. But when man fell, he departed from the true God, and the union that was between his heart and his Creator was broken. He wholly lost his principle of love to God. And

henceforward man clave to other gods. He gave that respect to the creature, which is due to the Creator. — When God ceased to be the object of his supreme love and respect, other things of course became the objects of it.

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as his god. If man [does] not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or some idol. It is impossible it should be otherwise. Something will have the heart of man. And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god. And therefore when man by the fall extinguished all love to the true God, he set up the creature in his room. For having lost his esteem and love of the true God, and set up other gods in his room, and in opposition to him; and God still demanding their worship, and opposing them; enmity necessarily follows.

That which a man chooses for his god, he sets his heart mainly upon. And nothing will so soon excite enmity, as opposition in that which is dearest. A man will be the greatest enemy to him who opposes him in what he chooses for his god. He will look on none as standing so much in his way, as he that would deprive him of his god. Jdg. 18:24, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" A man, in this respect, cannot serve two masters that stand in competition for his service. And not only, if he serves one, he cannot serve the other; but if he cleaves to one, he will necessarily hate the other. Mat. 6:24, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And this is the very reason that men hate God. In this case it is, as when two kings set up in one kingdom, in opposition one to the other; and they both challenge the same throne, and are competitors for the same crown. They who are loyal, hearty subjects to the one, will necessarily be enemies to the other. As that which is a man's god, is the object of his highest love; so that God who chiefly opposes him in it, must be the object of his greatest hatred.

The gods which a natural man worships, instead of the God that made him, are himself and the world. He has withdrawn his esteem and honor from God, and proudly exalts himself. As Satan was not willing to be in

subjection; and therefore rebelled, and set up himself; so a natural man, in the proud and high thoughts he has of himself, sets up himself upon God's throne. He gives his heart to the world, worldly riches, worldly pleasures, and worldly honors. They have the possession of that regard which is due to God. The apostle sums up all the idolatry of wicked men in their love of the world. 1 John 2:15-16, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And the apostle James observes ,that a man must necessarily be the enemy of the true God, if he be a friend of the world. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God," Jam. 4:4.

All the sin that men commit, is what they do in the service of their idols. There is no one act of sin, but what is an act of service to some false god. And therefore wherein soever God opposes sin in them, he is opposite to their worship of their idols. On which account they are his enemies. God opposes them in their service of their idols, in the following respects:

1. He manifests his utter *abhorrence* of their attachment to their idols. Their idols are what they love above all things: they would by no means part with them. This wickedness is sweet unto them. Job 20:12. If you take them away, what have they more? If they lose their idols, they lose their all. — To rend away their idols from them, would be more grievous to them, than to rend body and soul asunder. It is like rending their heart in twain. They love their idolatry. But God does not approve of it, but exceedingly hates it. He will by no means be reconciled to it; and therefore they hate him. God declares an infinite hatred of every act they do, in the service of their false gods. He declares himself to be a holy and a jealous God; a God who is very jealous of his own honor; and that greatly abhors giving that honor to another.

2. He utterly *forbids* their cleaving to those idols, and all the service that they do to them. He not only shows that he dislikes it, but he utterly forbids it; and demands that they should worship him; serve him only, and give their hearts wholly to him: without tolerating any competitor. He allows them to serve their idols in no degree; but requires them to cast them away *utterly* and pay no more worship to them, at any time. He

requires a final parting with their idols. Not only that they should refrain from them for a while, but cast them away forever; and never gratify their idolatrous respect to them any more. This is so exceeding contrary to them, and what they are so averse to, that they are enemies to God for it. They cannot endure God's commands, because they forbid all that in which their hearts are so engaged. And as they hate God's commands, so they hate Him whose commands they are.

3. He *threatens* them with everlasting damnation for their service of their idols. He threatens them for their *past* idolatry. He threatens them with his eternal wrath, for their having departed from him, and their having chosen to themselves other gods. He threatens them for that *disposition* they have in their hearts to cleave to other gods. He threatens the least degrees of that respect which they have in their hearts to their idols. He manifests that he will not tolerate any regard to them, but has fixed eternal death, as the wages of every degree of it. And he will not release them from their guilt; he holds them to their obligations; and he will accept of no atonement that they can make. He will not forgive them for whatever they do in religion; whatever pains they take; whatever tears they shed. He will accept of no money or price that they have to offer.

And he threatens every *future* act of their idolatry. He not only forbids them ever to be guilty of the least act, but forbids them on pain of eternal damnation. So strictly does God prohibit them from the service of their beloved idols! He threatens them with everlasting wrath for all exercises of inordinate love of worldly profit; for all manifestations of inordinate regard to worldly pleasures, or worldly honors. He threatens them with everlasting torments for their self-exaltations. He requires them to deny and renounce themselves, and to abase themselves at his feet, on pain of bearing his wrath to all eternity.

The strictness of God's law is a principal cause of man's enmity against God. If God were one that did not so much hate sin; if he would allow them in the gratification of their lusts in some degree, and his threatenings were not so awful against all criminal indulgence; if his threatenings were not so absolute; if his displeasure could be appeased by a few tears, a little reformation, or the like; they would not be so great enemies, nor hate him so much as they do. But God shows himself to be

an implacable enemy to their idols, and has threatened everlasting wrath, infinite calamity, for all that they do in the service of their lusts. And this makes them irreconcilable enemies to him.

For this reason, the scribes and Pharisees were such bitter enemies to Christ; because he showed himself to be such an enemy to their pride, conceit of their own wisdom, self-righteousness, and inordinate affectation of their own honor, which was their god. Natural men are enemies to God, because he is so opposite to them, in that in which they place their all. If you go to take away that which is very dear to a man, nothing will provoke him more. God is infinitely opposite to that in which natural men place all their delight, and all their happiness. He is an enemy to that which natural men value as their greatest honor and highest dignity; and to which they wholly trust; viz. their own righteousness.

Hence natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being. Some of their fellow-creatures may stand very much in their way, with regard to some things on which they set their hearts; but God opposes them with respect to ALL their idols, and his opposition to them is infinitely great. None of our fellow-creatures ever oppose us in any of our interests so much as God opposes wicked men in their idolatry. His infinite opposition is manifested by his threatening an infinite punishment, viz. his dreadful wrath to all eternity, misery without end. Hence we need not wonder that natural men are enemies to God.

SECTION IV

The objection, that men are not conscious of this enmity, answered.

NATURAL men do not generally conceive themselves to be so bad; they have not this notion of themselves, that they are enemies to God. And therefore when they hear such doctrine as this taught them, they stand ready to make objections. Some may be ready to say, “I do not know, I am not sensible, that I hate God, and have a mortal enmity against him. I feel no such thing in my self, and if I have such enmity, why do not I feel it? If I am a mortal enemy, why should not I know it better than any body else? How can others see what is in my heart better than I myself? If I hate one

of my fellow-creatures, I can feel it inwardly working." To such an objection I would answer,

1. If you do but observe yourself, and search your own heart, unless you are strangely blinded, you may be sensible of those things, wherein enmity does fundamentally consist. Particularly, you may be sensible that you have at least had a low and contemptible estimation of God. And that, in your esteem, you set the trifles and vanities of this world far above him; so as to regard the enjoyment of these things far before the enjoyment of God, and to value these things better than his love. — And you may be sensible that you despise the *authority* of God, and value his commands and his honor but very little. Or if by some means you have blinded yourself, so as to think you do regard them now, doubtless you can look back and see that you have not regarded them. You may be sensible that you have had a disrelish and aversion towards God; an opposition to thinking of him; so that it would have been a very uncomfortable task to have been confined to that exercise for any time. The vanities of the world, at the same time, have been very pleasing to you; and you have been all swallowed up by them, while you have been averse to the things of religion. If you look into your heart, it is there plain to be seen, that there is an enmity in your *will*, that it is contrary to God's will, for you have been opposing the will of God all your life long. — These things are plain; it is nothing but some great delusion that can hide them from you. These are the foundation of all enmity. And if these things be in you, all the rest that we have spoken of will follow of course.

2. One reason why you have not more sensibly felt the exercises of malice against God, is that your enmity is now exercised partly in your unbelief of God's being; and this prevents its appearing in other ways. Man has naturally a principle of atheism in him; an indisposition to realize God's being, and a disposition to doubt of it. The being of God does not ordinarily seem real to natural men. All the discoveries that there are of God's being in his works, will not overcome the principle of atheism in the heart. And though they seem in some measure to be rationally convinced, yet it does not appear real; the conviction is faint. There is no strong conviction impressed on the mind that there is a God. And oftentimes they are ready to think that there is none. Now this will

prevent the exercise of this enmity, which otherwise would be felt; particularly, it may be an occasion of there not being sensible exercises of hatred.

It may in some measure be thus illustrated. If you had a rooted malice against another man, a principle that had been long established there, and if you should hear that he was dead, the sensible workings of your malice would not be felt, as when you realized it that he was alive. But if you should afterward hear the news contradicted, and perceive that your enemy was still alive; you would feel the same workings of hatred that you did before. And thus your not realizing the fact that God has a being, may prevent those sensible workings of hatred that otherwise you would have. If wicked men in this world were sensible of the reality of God's being, as the wicked are in another, they would feel more of that hatred which men in another world do. The exercise of corruption in one way, may, and often does, prevent it working in other ways. As covetousness may prevent the exercise of pride, so atheism may prevent malice; and yet it may be no argument of there being any less enmity in the heart; for it is the same enmity, working in another way. The same enmity that in this world works by atheism, will in another world, where there will be no room for atheism, work by malice and blasphemy. The same mortal enmity which, if you saw there was a God, might make you to wish there were none, may now dispose and incline you to think there is none. Men are very often apt to think things are as they would have them to be. The same principle disposes you to think God has no existence, which, if you knew he had, would dispose you, if it were possible, to dispossess him of it.

3. If you think that here is a God, yet you do not realize it, that he is such a God as he really is. You do not realize it, that he is so holy as he is; that he has such a hatred of sin as indeed he has; that he is so just a God as he is, who will by no means clear the guilty. But that in the Psalms is applicable to you: "these things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," Psa. 50:21. So that your atheism appears in this, as well as in thinking there is no God. So that your objection arises from this, that you do not find such a sensible hatred against that god which you have formed, to suit yourself;

a god that you like better than the true God. But this is no argument that you have not bitter enmity against the true God; for it was your enmity against the true God, and your not liking him, that has put you upon forming up another in your imagination, that you like better. It is your enmity against those attributes of God's holiness and justice, and the like, that has put you upon conceiting another, who is not so holy as he is, and does not hate sin so much, and will not be so strictly just in punishing it; and whose wrath against sin is not so terrible.

But if you were sensible of the vanity of your own conceits, and that God was not such an one as you have imagined; but that he is, as he is indeed, an infinitely holy, just, sin hating and sin revenging God, who will not tolerate nor endure the worship of idols, you would be much more liable to feel the sensible exercises of enmity against him than you are now. And this experience confirms. For we see that when men come to be under convictions, and to be made sensible that God is not as they have heretofore imagined; but that he is such a jealous, sin hating God, and whose wrath against sin is so dreadful, they are much more apt to have sensible exercises of enmity against him than before.

4. Your having always been taught that God is infinitely above you, and out of your reach, has prevented your enmity being exercised in those ways, that otherwise it would have been. And hence your enmity has not been exercised in revengeful thoughts; because revenge has never found any room here; it has never found any handle to take hold of: there has been no conception of any such thing, and hence it has lain still. A serpent will not bite, or spit poison, at that which it sees at a great distance; which if it saw near, would do it immediately. Opportunity often shows what men are, whether friends or enemies. Opportunity to do puts men in mind of doing; wakens up such principles as lay dormant before. Opportunity stirs up desire to do, where there was before a disposition, that without opportunity would have lain still. If a man has had an old grudge against another, and has a fair opportunity to be revenged, this will revive his malice, and waken up a desire of revenge.

If a great and sovereign prince injures a poor man, and what he does is looked upon as very cruel, that will not ordinarily stir up passionate revenge, because he is so much above him, and out of his reach. Many a

man has appeared calm and meek, when he has had no power in his hands, and has not appeared, either to himself or others, to have any disposition to cruel acts; yet afterwards, when he came to have opportunity by unexpected advancement, or otherwise, has appeared like a ravenous wolf, or devouring lion. So it was with Hazael. "And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing! And Elisha answered, the Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria," 2 Kings 8:12, 13. Hazael was then a servant; he had no power in his hands to do as he pleased; and so his cruel disposition had lain hid, and he did not himself imagine that it was there. But afterwards, when he became king of Syria, and was absolute, having none to control him; then it broke out and appeared, and he did as the prophet had foretold. He committed those very acts of cruelty, that he thought it was not in his heart to do. It was want of opportunity that made the difference. It was all in his heart before. He was such a dog then as to do this thing, but only had not opportunity. And therefore when he seems surprised that the prophet should say so of him, all the reason the prophet gives is, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

Some natural men are such "dogs" as to do things, if they had opportunity, which they do not imagine it is in their hearts to do. You object against your having a moral hatred against God; that you never felt any desire to dethrone him. But one reason has been, that it has always been conceived so impossible by you. But if the throne of God were within your reach, and you knew it, it would not be safe one hour. Who knows what thoughts would presently arise in your heart by such an opportunity, and what disposition would be raised up in your heart. Who would trust your heart, that there would not presently be such thoughts as these, though they are enough to make one tremble to mention them? "Now I have opportunity to set my self at liberty — that I need not be kept in continual slavery by the strict law of God. — Then I may take my liberty to walk in that way I like best, and need not be continually in such slavish fear of God's displeasure. And God has not done well by me in

many instances. He has done most unjustly by me, in holding me bound to destruction for unbelief, and other things which I cannot help. — He has shown mercy to others, and not to me. I have now an opportunity to deliver myself, and there can be no danger of my being hurt for it. There will be nothing for us to be terrified about, and so keep us in slavery."

Who would trust your heart, that such thoughts would not arise? Or others much more horrid and too dreadful to be mentioned? And therefore I forbear. Those natural men are foolishly insensible of what is in their own hearts, who think there would be no danger of any such workings of heart, if they knew they had opportunity.

5. You little consider how much your having no more of the sensible exercises of hatred to God is owing to a being restrained by fear. You have always been taught what a dreadful thing it is to hate God, and how terrible his displeasure; that God sees the heart and knows all the thoughts; and that you are in his hands, and he can make you as miserable as he pleases, and as soon as he pleases. And these things have restrained you. And the fear that has risen from them, has kept you from appearing what you are; it has kept down your enmity, and made that serpent afraid to show its head, as otherwise it would do. If a wrathful man were wholly under the power of an enemy, he would be afraid to exercise his hatred in outward acts, unless it were with great disguise. And if it be supposed that such an enemy, in whose power he was, could see his heart, and know all his thoughts; and apprehended that he would put him to a terrible death, if he saw the workings of malice there, how greatly would this restrain! He would be afraid so much as to believe himself, that he hated his enemy. But there would be all manner of disguise and hypocrisy, and feigning even of thoughts and affections.

Thus your enmity has been kept under *restraint*; and thus it has been from your infancy. You have grown up in it, so that it is become an *habitual* restraint. You dare not so much as think you hate God. If you do exercise hatred, you have a disguise for it, whereby you endeavor even to hide it from your own conscience; and so have all along deceived yourself. Your deceit is very old and habitual. There has been only restraint; not mortification. There has been an enmity against God in its full strength. It has been only restrained, like an enemy that durst not rise up and show

himself.

6.. One reason why you have not felt more sensible hatred to God may be because you have not had much trial of what is in your heart. It may be God has hitherto, in a great measure, let you alone. The enmity that is in men's hearts against God, is like a serpent, which, if it be let alone lies still. But if anybody disturbs it, will soon hiss, and be enraged, and show its serpentine spiteful nature.

Notwithstanding the good opinion you have of yourself, yet a little trial would show you to be a viper, and your heart would be set all on rage against God. One thing that restrains you now is your hope. You hope to receive many things from God. Your own interest is concerned. So that both hope and fear operate together, to restrain your enmity from sensible exercises. But if once hope were gone, you would soon show what you were; you would feel your enmity against God in a rage.

7. If you pretend that you do not feel enmity against God, and yet act as an enemy, you may certainly conclude that it is not because you are no enemy, but because you do not know your own heart. Actions are the best interpreters of the disposition. They show, better than anything else, what the heart is. It must be because you do not observe your own behavior that you question whether you are an enemy to God.

What other account can you give of your own carriage, but only your being God's enemy? What other account can be given of your opposing God in your ways; walking so exceeding contrary to him, contrary to his counsels, contrary to his commands, and contrary to his glory? What other account can be given of your casting so much contempt upon God; your setting him so low; your acting so much against his authority, and against his kingdom and interest in the world? What other account can be given of your so setting your will in opposition to God's will, and that so obstinately, for so long a time, against so many warnings as you have had? What other account can be given of your joining so much with Satan, in the opposition he is making to the kingdom of God in the world? And that you will join with him against God, though it be so much against your own interest, and though you expose yourself by it to everlasting misery?

Such like behavior in one man towards another, would be sufficient evidence of enmity. If he should be seen to behave thus, and that it was his constant manner, none would want better evidence that he was an enemy to his neighbor. If you yourself had a servant that carried it towards you, as you do towards God, you would not think there was need of any greater evidence of his being your enemy. Suppose your servant should manifest much contempt of you; and disregard your commands as much as you do the commands of God; should go directly contrary, and in many ways act the very reverse of your commands; should seem to set himself in ways that were contrary to your will obstinately and incorrigibly, without any amendment from your repeated calls, warnings, and threatenings; and should act so cross to you day and night, as you do to God; would he not be justly deemed your enemy? Suppose, further, when you sought one thing, he would seek the contrary; when you did any work, he would, as much as in him lay, undo and destroy that work; and suppose he should continually drive at such ends, as tended to overthrow the ends you aimed at. When you sought to bring to pass any design, he would endeavor to overthrow your design; and set himself as much against your interest, as you do yourself against God's honor. And suppose you should moreover see him, from time to time, with those who were your declared mortal enemies; making them his counselors, and hearkening to their counsels, as much as you do to Satan's temptations; should you not think you had sufficient evidence that he was your enemy? — Therefore consider seriously your own ways, and weigh your own behavior. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? — see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done," Jer. 2:23.

SECTION V

The objections, that they show respect to God, and experience some religious affections, answered.

NATURAL men may be ready to object, the respect they show to God, from time to time. This makes many to think that they are far from being such enemies to God. They pray to him in secret, and attend on public worship, and take a great deal of pains to do it in a decent manner. It seems to them that they show God a great deal of respect. They use many very respectful terms in their prayer. They are respectful in their manner

of speaking, their voice, gestures, and the like. — But to this I answer, that all this is done in mere hypocrisy. All this seeming respect is feigned, there is no sincerity in it. There is external respect, but none in the heart. There is a show, and nothing else. You only cover your enmity with a painted veil. You put on the disguise of a friend, but in your heart you are a mortal enemy. There is external honor, but inward contempt; there is a show of friendship and regard, but inward hatred. You do but deceive yourself with your show of respect; and endeavor to deceive God; not considering that God looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. — Here consider particularly,

1. That much of that seeming respect which natural men show to God, is owing to their education. They have been taught from their infancy that they ought to show great respect to God. They have been taught to use respectful language when speaking about God, and to behave with solemnity, when attending on those exercises of religion, wherein they have to do with him. From their childhood, they have seen that this is the manner of others, when they pray to God, to use reverential expressions. and a reverential behavior before him.

Those who are brought up in places where they have, commonly from their infancy, heard men take the name of God in vain, and swear and curse, and blaspheme; they learn to do the same; and it becomes habitual to them. And it is the same way, and no other, that you have learned to behave respectfully towards God. [It is] not that you have any more respect to God than they; but they have been brought up one way, and you another. In some parts of the world, men are brought up in the worship of idols of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone, made in the shape of men and beast. “They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calf,” Hos. 13:2. In some parts of the world, they are brought up to worship serpents, and are taught from their infancy to show great respect to them. And in some places, they are brought up in worshipping the devil, who appears to them in a bodily shape; and to behave with a show of great reverence and honor towards him. And what respect you show to God has no better foundation; it comes the same way, and is worth no more.

2. That show of respect which you make is forced. You come to God, and

make a great show of respect to him, and use very respectful terms, with a reverential tone and manner of speaking; and your countenance is grave and solemn. You put on an humble aspect; and use humble, respectful postures, out of fear. You are afraid that God will execute his wrath upon you, and so you feign a great deal of respect, that he may not be angry with you. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee," Psa. 66:3. In the original it is, *shall thine enemies lie to thee*. It is rendered therefore in the margin, *shall yield feigned obedience to thee*. All that you do in religion is forced and feigned. Through the greatness of God's power, you yield feigned obedience. You are in God's power, and he is able to destroy you. And so you feign a great deal of respect to him, that he might not destroy you. As one might do towards an enemy that had taken him captive, though he at the same time would gladly make his escape, if he could, by taking away the life of him who had taken him captive.

3. It is not real respect that moves you to behave so towards God. You do it because you hope you shall get by it. It is respect to yourself, and not respect to God that moves you. You hope to move God by it to bestow the rewards of his children. You are like the Jews who followed Christ, and called him Rabbi, and would make him a king. Not that they honored him so much in their hearts, as to think him worthy of the honor of a king; or that they had the respect of sincere subjects; but they did it for the sake of the loaves. "Jesus perceived that they would come and make him a king. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, how camest thou hither? Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled," John 6:15, 25, 26.

These things do not argue but that you are implacable enemies to God. If you examine your prayers and other duties, your own consciences will tell you, that the seeming respect which you have shown to God in them, has been only in hypocrisy. Oftentimes you have set forth in your prayers, that God was a great, a glorious, and an infinitely holy God, as if you greatly honored him on the account of these attributes; and, at the same time, you had no sense in your heart of the greatness and glory of God, or

of any excellency in his holiness. Your own consciences will tell you, that you have often pretended to be thankful; you have told God, that you thanked him you was alive, and thanked him for various mercies, when you have not found the least jot of thankfulness in your heart. And so you have told God of your own unworthiness, and set forth what a vile creature you [were]; when you have had no humble sense of your own unworthiness.

If these forementioned restraints were thrown off, you would soon throw off all your show of respect. Take away fear, and a regard to your own interest, and there would soon be an end to all those appearances of love, honor, and reverence, which now you make. All these things are not at all inconsistent with the most implacable enmity. The devil himself made a show of respect to Christ, when he was afraid that he was going to torment him; and when he hoped to persuade Christ to spare him longer. "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not," Luke 8:28.

Some may perhaps object against this doctrine of their being God's enemies, the *religious affections* they have sometimes experienced. They may be ready to say that when they have come before God in prayer, they have not only used respectful terms and gestures, but they have prayed with affection; their prayers have been attended with tears, which they are ready to think showed something in the heart. — But to this it is answered, that these affections have risen from other causes, and not from any true respect to God.

(1.) They have risen from self-love, and not love to God. If you have wept before God, from the consideration of your own pitiful case; that has been because you loved yourself, and not because you had any respect to God. If your tears have been from sorrow for your sins; you have mourned for your sins, because you have sinned against yourself, and not because you have sinned against God. "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?" Zec. 7:5.

(2.) Pride, and a good thought of themselves, very commonly has a great hand in the affections of natural men. They have a good opinion of what

they are doing when they are praying; and the reflection on that affects them. They are affected with their own goodness. Men's self-righteousness often occasions tears. A high opinion of themselves before God, and an imagination of their being persons of great account with him, has affected them in their transactions with God. There is commonly abundance of pride in the midst of tears; and often pride is in a great measure the source of them. And then they are so far from being an argument that you are not an enemy to God, that on the contrary, they are an argument, that you are. In your very tears, you are, in a vain conceit of yourself, exalting yourself against God.

(3.) The affections of natural men often arise from wrong notions they have of God. They conceived of God after the manner they do of men, as though he were a being liable to be wrought upon in his affections. They conceive of him as one whose heart could be drawn, whose affections can be overcome, by what he sees in them. They conceive of him as being taken with them, and their performances; and this works on their affections; and thus one tear draws another, and their affections increase by reflection. And oftentimes they conceived of God as one that loves them, and is a friend to them. And such a mistake may work much on their affections. But such affections that arise towards God, as they conceit him to be, is no argument that they have not the same implacable hatred towards God, considered as he really is. There is no concluding that men are not enemies, because they are affected and shed tears in their prayers, and the like. Saul was very much affected when David expostulated with him about pursuing after him, and seeking to kill him. David's words wrought exceedingly upon Saul's affections. "And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? and Saul lift up his voice and wept," 1 Sam. 24:16, chap 26:1, 10. He was so affected that he wept aloud, and called David his son, though he was but just before seeking his life. But this affection of Saul was no argument that he did not still continue in his enmity against David. He was David's mortal enemy before, and sought his life; and so he did afterwards. It was but a pang. His enmity was not mortified or done away. The next news we hear of Saul is that he was pursuing David, and seeking his life again.

SECTION VI

Restraining grace a great privilege.

IF natural men are God's enemies, then hence we may learn, how much we are indebted to God for his restraining grace. If all natural men are God's enemies, what would they not do, if they were not restrained! For what has one that is an enemy in his disposition, to restrain him from acting against him to whom he is an enemy? Hatred will not restrain a man from acting anything against him that is hated. Nothing is too bad for hatred, if it be mere hatred and no love. Hatred shows no kindness either in doing, or forbearing. It will never make a man forbear to act against God; for the very nature of hatred is to seek evil. But wicked men, as has been shown, are mere enemies to God. They have hatred, without any love at all. And hence natural men have nothing within them, in their own nature, to restrain them from anything that is bad. And therefore their restraint must not be owing to nature, but to restraining grace. And therefore whatever wickedness we have been kept from, it is not because we have not been bad enough to commit it; but it is God has restrained us, and kept us back from sin. There can be no worse principle, than a principle of hatred to God. And there can be no principle that will go further in wickedness than this, if it be neither mortified nor restrained. But it is not mortified in natural men; and therefore all that keeps them from any degree of wickedness, is restrained. If we have seen others do things that we never did; and if they have done worse than we, this is owing to restraining grace. If we have not done as bad as Pharaoh, it is owing to divine restraints. If we have not done as bad as Judas, or as the scribes and Pharisees, or as bad as Herod, or Simon Magus, it is because God has restrained our corruption. If we have ever heard or read of any that have done worse than we; if we have not gone the length in sinning, that the most wicked pirates or carnal persecutors have gone, this is owing to restraining grace. For we are all naturally the enemies of God as much as they. If we have not committed the unpardonable sin, it is owing to restraining grace. There is no worse principle in exercise in that sin, than enmity against God. There is the entire fountain, and all the foundation of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in that enmity against God that naturally reigns in us.

It is not we that restrain ourselves from the commission of the greatest imaginable wickedness; for enmity against God reigns in us and over us; we are under its power and dominion, and are sold under it. We do not restrain that which reigns over us. A slave, as long as he continues a mere slave, cannot control his master. “He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin,” John 8:34. So that the restraint of this our cruel tyrant, is owing to God, and not to us. What does a poor, impotent subject do to restrain the absolute Lord, that has him wholly under his power? How much will it appear that the world is indebted to the restraining grace of God, if we consider that the world is full of enemies to God. The world is full of inhabitants; and almost all are God’s enemies, his implacable and mortal enemies. What therefore would they not do, what work would they not make, if God did not restrain them?

God’s work in the restraint that he exercises over a wicked world, is a glorious work. God’s holding the reins upon the corruptions of a wicked world, and setting bounds to their wickedness, is a more glorious work, than his ruling the raging of the sea, and setting bounds to its proud waves, and saying, hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. In hell, God lets the wickedness of wicked spirits have the reins, to rage without restraint; and it would be in a great measure upon earth as it is in hell, did not God restrain the wickedness of the world. But in order to the better understanding how it is owing to the restraining grace of God, that we are kept and withheld from the highest acts of sin, I would here observe several things.

1. Whenever men are withheld from sinning by the common influence of God’s Spirit, they are withheld by restraining grace. If sinners are awakened, and are made sensible of the great guilt that sin brings, and that it exposes to a dreadful punishment; under such circumstances they dare not allow themselves in willful sin; God restrains them by the convictions of his Spirit; and therein their being kept from sin, is owing to restraining grace. And unawakened sinners that live under the gospel, who are in a great measure secure, commonly have some degrees of the influence of God’s Spirit, with his ordinances influencing natural conscience. And though they be not sufficient thoroughly to rouse them out of security, or make them reform; yet they keep them from going such

lengths in sin, as otherwise they might do. And this is restraining grace. They are indeed very stupid and sottish. Yet they would be a great deal more so, if God should let them wholly alone.

2. All the restraints that men are under from the word and ordinances is from grace. The word and ordinances of God might have some degree of influence on men's natural principles of self-love, to restrain them from sin, without any degree of the influence of God's Spirit. But this would be the restraining grace of God; for God's goodness and mercy to a sinful world appears in his giving his word to be a restraint on the wickedness of the world. When men are restrained by fear of those punishments that the Word of God threatens; or by the warnings, the offers, and promises of it; when the Word of God works upon hope, or fear, or natural conscience, to restrain men from sin, this is the restraining grace of God, and is owing to his mercy. It is an instance of God's mercy that he has revealed hell, to restrain men's wickedness; and that he has revealed a way of salvation, and a possibility of eternal life. This which has great influence on men to keep them from sin, is the restraining grace of God.

3. When men are restrained from sin, by the light of nature, this also is of grace. If men are destitute of the light of God's Word, yet the light of natural conscience teaches that sin brings guilt, and exposes to punishment. The light of nature teaches that there is a God who governs the world, and will reward the good and punish the evil. God is the author of the light of nature, as well as the light of revelation. He in mercy to mankind makes known many things by natural light to work upon men's fear and self-love, in order to restrain their corruptions.

4. When God restrains men's corruptions by his providence, this is from grace. And that whether it be his general providence in ordering the state of mankind; or his providential disposals towards them in particular.

(1.) God greatly restrains the corruption of the world, by ordering the state of mankind. He hath set them here in a mortal state, and in a state of probation for eternity; and that is a great restraint to corruption. God hath so ordered the state of mankind, that ordinarily many kinds of sin and wickedness are *disgraceful*, and what tend to the hurt of a man's character and reputation amongst his fellowmen; and that is a great

restraint. He hath so disposed the world, that many kinds of wickedness are many ways very contrary to men's temporal *interest*; and mankind [is] led to prohibit many kinds of wickedness by human laws; and that is a great restraint. God hath set up a church in the world, made up of those who, if they are answerable to their profession, have the fear and love of God in their hearts; and they by holding forth revealed light, by keeping up the ordinances of God, and by warning others, are a great restraint to the wickedness of the world.

In all these things, the restraining grace of God appears. — It is God's mercy to mankind, that he has so ordered their state, that they should have so many things, by fear and a regard to their own interest, to restrain their corruptions. It is God's mercy to the world, that the state of mankind here differs from the state of the damned in hell; where men will have none of these things to restrain them. The wisdom of God, as well as the attributes of his grace, greatly appear in thus disposing things for the restraining of the wickedness of men.

(2.) God greatly restrains the corruptions of men by his providence towards particular persons; by placing men in such circumstances as to lay them under restraints. And to this it is often owing that some natural men never go such lengths in sinning, or are never guilty of such atrocious wickedness, as some others, that Providence has placed them in different circumstances. If it were not for this, many thousands of natural men, who now live sober and orderly lives, would do as Pharaoh did. The reason why they do not, is, that Providence has placed them in different circumstances. If they were in the same circumstances as Pharaoh was in, they would do as he did. And so, if in the same circumstances as Manassah, as Judas, or Nero. But Providence restrains their corruptions, by putting them in such circumstances, as not to open such a door or outlet for their corruption, as he did to them. So some do not perpetrate such horrid things, they do not live such horribly vicious lives, as some others, because Providence has restrained them, by ordering that they should have a better education than others. Providence has ordered that they should be the children of pious parents, it may be, or should live where they should enjoy many means of grace; and so Providence has laid them under restraints. Now this is restraining grace; or the attribute

of God's grace exercised in thus restraining persons.

And oftentimes God restrains men's corruptions by particular events of providence. By particular afflictions they are brought under, or by particular occurrences, whereby God does, as it were, block up men's way in their course of sin, or in some wickedness that they has devised, and that otherwise they would perpetrate. Or something happens unexpected to hold men back from that which they were about to commit. Thus God restrained David by his providence from shedding blood, as he intended to do. "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing *the Lord hath withholden* thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand," — 1 Sam 25:26. God withheld him from it no otherwise, than by ordering it so in his providence that Abigail should come, and by her wisdom should cool, pacify, and persuade him to alter his purpose. See verse 32, 33, 34.

5. Godly persons are greatly indebted to restraining grace, in keeping them from dreadful acts of sin. So it was in that instance of David, just mentioned. Even godly persons, when God has left, and has not restrained them, have fallen into dreadful acts of sin. So did David, in the case of Uriah; and Lot, and Peter. And when other godly persons are kept from falling into such sins, or much worse sins than these, it is owing to the restraining grace of God. Merely having a principle of grace in their hearts, or merely their being godly persons, without God's presence to restrain them, will not keep them from great acts of sin. That the godly do not fall into the most horrid sins that can be conceived of, is owing not so much to any inconsistency between their falling into such sins, and the having a principle of grace in the heart, as it is owing to the covenant mercy of God, whereby he has promised never to leave nor forsake his people; and that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; but with the temptation will make a way for them to escape. If saving grace restrains men from great acts of sin, that is owing to God who gives such exercises of grace at that time when the temptation comes, that they are restrained.

Let not the godly therefore be insensible of their obligations to the restraining grace of God. Though they cannot be said to be enemies to God, because a principle of enmity does not reign; yet they have the very

same principle and seed of enmity in them, though it be mortified. Though it be not in reigning power, yet it has great strength; and is too strong for them, without God's almighty power to help them against it. Though they be not enemies to God, because they have a principle of love; yet their old man, the body of sin and death that yet remains in them, is a mortal enemy to God. Corruption in the godly, is not better than it is in the wicked; but is of as bad a nature every whit, as that which is in a mortal enemy to God. And though it be not in reigning power; yet it would dreadfully rage, were it not for God's restraining grace.

God give his restraining grace to both natural and godly men. But there is this difference; he gives his restraining grace to his children in the way of covenant mercy; it is part of the mercy promised in his covenant. God is faithful, and will not leave them to sin in like manner as wicked men do; otherwise they would do every whit as bad. — Let not therefore the godly attribute it to themselves, or merely to their own goodness, that they are not guilty of such horrid crimes as they hear of in others; let them consider it as not owing to them, but to God's restraints. — Thus, all, both godly and ungodly, may learn from this doctrine, their great obligations to the restraining grace of God.

SECTION VII

Why natural men are not willing to come to Christ, and their dreadful condition.

HENCE we may learn the reason why natural men will not come to Christ. They do not come because they will not come. "Ye *will* not come to me, that ye might have life," John 5:40. When we say that natural men are not willing to come to Christ, it is not meant that they are not willing to be delivered from hell; for without doubt, no natural man is willing to go to hell. Nor is it meant, that they are not willing that Christ should keep them from going to hell. Without doubt, natural men under awakenings often greatly desire this. But this does not argue that they are willing to come to Christ. For, notwithstanding their desire to be delivered from hell, their hearts do not close with Christ, but are averse to him. They see nothing in Christ wherefore they should desire him; no beauty nor comeliness to draw their hearts to him. And they are not

willing to take Christ as he is; they would fain divide him. There are some things in him that they like, and others that they greatly dislike. But consider him as he is, and as he is offered to them in the gospel, and they are not willing to accept of Christ; for in doing so, they must of necessity part with all their sins; they must sell the world, and part with their own righteousness. But they had rather, for the present, run the venture of going to hell, than do that.

When men are *truly* willing to come to Christ, they are *freely* willing. It is not what they are forced and driven to by threatenings; but they are willing to come, and choose to come without being driven. But natural men have no such free willingness. But on the contrary have an aversion. And the ground of it is that which we have heard, viz. that they are enemies to God. Their having such a reigning enmity against God, makes them obstinately refuse to come to Christ. If a man is an enemy to God, he will necessarily be an enemy to Christ too; for Christ is the Son of God; he is infinitely near to God, yea, has the nature of God, as well as the nature of man. He is a Savior appointed of God. He anointed him, and sent him into the world. And in performing the work of redemption, he wrought the works of God; always did those things that pleased him; and all that he does as a Savior, is to his glory. And one great thing he aimed at in redemption, was to deliver them from their idols, and bring them to God. The case being so, and sinners being enemies to God, they will necessarily be opposite to coming to Christ; for Christ is of God, and as a Savior seeks them to bring them to God only. But natural men are not of God, but are averse to him.

Hence we see, how dreadful is the condition of natural men. Their state is a state of enmity with God. If we consider what God is, and what men are, it will be easy for us to conclude that such men as are God's enemies, must be miserable. Consider, ye that are enemies to God, how great he is. He is the eternal God who fills heaven and earth, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. He is the God that made you; in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways; the God in whom you live, and move, and have your being; who has your soul and body in his hands every moment.

You would look on yourself as in very unhappy circumstances, if your

neighbors were all your enemies, and none of your fellow-creatures were your friends. If everybody were set against you, and all despised and hated you, you would be ready to think, you had better be out of the world than in it. But if it be such a calamity to have enmity maintained between you and your fellow-creatures, what is it, when you and the almighty God are enemies? What avails either the friendship or enmity of your neighbors, poor worms of the dust, in comparison of the friendship or enmity of the great God of heaven and earth? — Consider,

1. If you continue in your enmity a little longer, there will be a mutual enmity between God and you to all eternity. God will appear to be your dreadful and irreconcilable enemy. If you should die an enemy to God, there will be no such thing as any reconciliation after death. God will then appear to you in hatred, without any love, any pity, and any mercy at all. As you hate God, he will hate you. And that will be verified of you. “My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me,” Zec. 11:8. And then God will be your enemy forever. If you be not reconciled so as to become his friend in this life, God never will become your friend after death. If you continue an enemy to God till death, God will continue an enemy to you to all eternity. You will have no mediator offered you, there will be no day’s-man betwixt you. So that it becomes you to consider what it will be to have God your enemy to all eternity, without any possibility of being reconciled.

Consider, what will it be to have this enmity to be mutual, and maintained forever on both sides? For as God will forever continue an enemy to you, so you will forever continue an enemy to God. If you continue God’s enemy until death, you will always be his enemy. And after death your enmity will have no restraint, but it will break out and rage without control. When you come to be a fire-brand hell, you will be so in two respects, viz. as you will be full of the fire of God’s wrath; and as you will be on a blaze with spite and malice towards God. You will be as full of the fire of malice, as you will with the fire of divine vengeance, and both will make you full of torment. Then you will appear as you are, a viper indeed. You are now under great disguise; a wolf in sheep’s clothing. But then your mask will be pulled off. You shall loose your garments, and walk naked. Rev. 16:15. Then will you vent your rage and

malice in fearful blasphemies. That same tongue, to cool which you will wish for a drop of water, will be eternally employed in cursing and blaspheming God and Christ. And that not from any new corruption being put into your heart; but only from God's withdrawing his hand from restraining your old corruption. And what a miserable way will this be of spending your eternity!

2. Consider, what will be the consequence of a mutual enmity between God and you, if it be continued? Though hitherto you have met with no very great changes, yet they will come. After a little while, dying time will come; and then what will be the consequence of this enmity? God, whose enemy you are, has the frame of your body in his hands. Your times are in his hand; and he it is that appoints your bounds. And when he sends death to arrest you, to change your countenance, to dissolve your frame, and to take you away from all your earthly friends, and from all that is dear and pleasant to you in the world; what will be the issue? Will not you then stand in need of God's help? Would not he be the best friend in such a case, worth more than ten thousand earthly friends? If God be your enemy, then to whom will you betake yourself for a friend? When you launch forth into the boundless gulf of eternity, then you will need some friend to take care of you, but if God be your enemy, where will you betake yourself? Your soul must go naked into another world, in eternal separation from all worldly things; and your soul will not be in its own power, to defend or dispose of itself. Will you not then need to have God for a friend, into whose hands you may commend your spirit? But how dreadful will it be, to have God your enemy!

The time is coming when the frame of this world shall be dissolved. Christ shall descend in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father; and you, with all the rest of mankind, must stand before his judgment-seat. Then what will be the consequence of this mutual enmity between God and you? If God be your enemy, who will stand your friend? Now, it may be, it does not appear to be very terrible to have God for your enemy. But when such changes as these are brought to pass, it will greatly alter the appearance of things. Then God's favor will appear to you of infinite worth. They, and they only, will then appear happy, who have the love of God. And then you will know that God's enemies are miserable. — But

under this head, consider more particularly several things.

(1.) What God can do to his enemies. Or rather, what can he not do? How miserable can he who is almighty make his enemies! Consider, you that are enemies to God, whether or not you shall be able to make your part good with him. “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?” 1 Cor. 10:22. Have you such a conceit of your own strength, as that you think to try it out with God? Do you intend to run the risk of an encounter with him? Do you imagine that your hands can be strong, or your heart can endure? Do you think you shall be well able to defend yourself, or to escape out of his hand? Do you think that you shall be able to uphold your spirits, when God acts as an enemy towards you? If so, then gird up your loins, and see what the event will be. Therefore thus will I do unto thee — “and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God.” — Amos 4:12. Is it not in vain to set the briers and thorns in battle array against devouring flames; which though they seemed to be armed with natural weapons ,yet the fire will pass through them, and burn them together? See Isa. 27:4.

And if you endeavor to support yourself under God’s wrath, cannot God lay you under such misery, as to cause your spirit quite to fail; so that you shall find no strength to resist him, or to uphold yourself? Why should a worm think of supporting himself against an omnipotent adversary? Consider, God has made your soul; and he can fill it with misery. He made your body, and can bring what torments he will upon it. God who made you, has given you a capacity to bear torment; and he has that capacity in his hands. How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such an enemy! Surely, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. 10:31.

(2.) If God be your enemy, you may rationally conclude that he will act as such in his dealings with you. We have already observed that you have enmity without any love or true respect. So, if you continue to be so, God will appear to be your mere enemy; and will be so forever, without being reconciled. But if it be so, he will doubtless act as such. If he eternally hates you, he will act in his dealings with you, as one that hates you without any love or pity. The proper tendency and aim of hatred is the misery of the object hated; so that you may expect God will make you

miserable, and that you will not be spared. — Now, God does not act as your mere enemy. If he corrects you, it is in measure. He now exercises abundance of mercy to you. He threatens you now; but it is in a way of warning, and so in a merciful way. He now calls, invites, and strives with you, and waits to be gracious to you. But hereafter there will be an end to all these things. In another world God will cease to show you mercy.

(3.) If you will continue God's enemy, you may rationally conclude that God will deal with you so as to make it appear how dreadful it is to have God for an enemy. It is very dreadful to have a mighty prince for an enemy. "The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion," Pro. 19:12. But if the wrath of a man, a fellow-worm, be so terrible, what is the wrath of God! And God will doubtless show it to be immensely more dreadful. If you will be an enemy, God will act so as to glorify those attributes which he exercises as an enemy; which are his majesty, his power, and justice. His great majesty, his awful justice, and mighty power, shall be showed upon you. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. 9:22.

(4.) Consider, what God has said he will do to his enemies. He has declared that they shall not escape; but that he will surely punish them. "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out all those that hate thee," Psa. 21:8. "And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face," Deu. 7:10. "The Lord shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses," Psa. 68:21.

Yea, God hath sworn that he will be avenged on them; and that in a most awful and dreadful manner. "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and I will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood (and my sword shall devour flesh), and that with the blood of the slain — from the beginning of revenges on the enemy," Deu. 32:40, 41, 42. The terribleness of the threatened destruction is here variously set forth. God "whets his glittering sword," as one that prepares himself to do some great

execution. “His hands take hold on judgment,” to signify that he will surely reward them as they deserve. “He will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him.” i.e. He will render their full reward. “I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.” This signifies the greatness of the destruction. It shall not be a little of their blood that shall satisfy; but his arrows shall be glutted with their blood. “And his sword shall devour flesh.” That is, it shall make dreadful waste of it. This is the terrible manner in which God will one day rise up and execute vengeance on his enemies!

Again, the completeness of their destruction is represented in the following words: “The wicked shall perish, the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume: into smoke shall they consume away,” Psa. 37:20. The fat of lambs, when it is burnt in the fire, burns all up; there is not so much as a cinder left; it all consumes into smoke. This represents the perfect destruction of God’s enemies in his wrath. So God hath promised Christ; that he would make his enemies his footstool, Psa. 110:1. i.e. He would pour the greatest contempt upon them, and as it were tread them under foot. Consider, that all these things will be executed on you, if you continue God’s enemies.

SECTION VIII

God may justly withhold mercy

IF natural men are God’s enemies, hence we may learn, how justly God may refuse to show you mercy. For is God obliged to show mercy to his enemies? Is God bound to set his love on them that have no love to him; but hate him with perfect hatred? Is he bound to come and dwell with them that have an aversion to him, and choose to keep at a distance from him, and fly from him as one that is hateful to them? Even should you desire the salvation of your soul, is God bound to comply with your desires, when you always resist and oppose his will? Is God bound to put honor upon you, and to advance you to such dignity as to be a child of the King of kings, and the heir of glory, while at the same time you set him too low to have even the lowest place in your heart?

This doctrine affords a strong argument for the absolute sovereignty of

God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. If God is pleased to show mercy to his haters, it is certainly fit that he should do it in a sovereign way, without acting as any way obliged. God will show mercy to his mortal enemies; but then he will not be bound, he will have his liberty to choose the objects of his mercy; to show mercy to what enemy he pleases, and to punish and destroy which of his haters he pleases. And certainly this is a fit and reasonable thing. It is fit that God should distribute saving blessings in this way, and in no other, viz. in a sovereign and arbitrary way. And that ever anybody thought of or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God. But consider here the following things:

1. How *causelessly* you are enemies to God. You have no manner of reason for it, either from what God is, or from what he has done. You have no reason for this *from what he is*. For he is an infinitely lovely and glorious Being. The fountain of all excellency, all that is amiable and lovely in the universe, is originally and eminently in him. Nothing can possibly be conceived of that could be lovely in God, that is not in him, and that in the greatest possible degree.

And you have no reason for this, *from what God has done*. For he has been a good and bountiful God to you. He has exercised abundance of kindness to you; has carried you from the womb, preserved your life, taken care of you, and provided for you, all your life long. He has exercised great patience and long-suffering towards you. If it had not been for the kindness of God to you, what would have become of you? What would have become of your body? And what, before this time, would have become of your soul? And you are now, every day and hour, maintained by the goodness and bounty of God. Every new breath you draw, is a new gift of his to you. How causelessly then are you such dreadful enemies to God! And how justly might he for it eternally deprive you of all mercy, seeing you do thus requite God for his mercy and kindness to you!

2. Consider, how *you would resent it*, if others were such enemies to you, as you are to God. If they had their hearts so full of enmity to you; if they

treated you with such contempt, and opposed you, as you do God; how would you resent it! Do you not find that you are apt greatly to resent it, when any oppose you, and show an ill spirit towards you? And though you excuse your own enmity against God from your corrupt nature that you brought into the world with you, which you could not help. Yet you do not excuse others for being enemies to you from their corrupt nature that they brought into the world, which they could not help; but are ready bitterly to resent it notwithstanding.

Consider therefore, if you, a poor, unworthy, unlovely creature, do so resent it, when you are hated, how may God justly resent it when you are enemies to him, an infinitely glorious Being; and a Being from whom you have received so much kindness!

3. How *unreasonable* is it for you to imagine that you can oblige God to have respect to you by anything that you can do, continuing still to be his enemy. If you think you have prayed, and read, and done something considerable for God; yet who cares for the seeming kindness of an enemy? What value would you yourself set upon a man making a show of friendship, when you knew at the same time, that he was inwardly your mortal enemy? Would you look upon yourself obliged for such respect and kindness? Would you not rather abhor it? Would you count such respect to be valued, as Joab's towards Amasa, who took him by the beard, and kissed him, and said, Art thou in health, my brother? And smote him at the same time under the fifth rib, and killed him! What if you do pray to God? Is he obliged to hear the prayers of an enemy? What if you have taken a great deal of pains? Is God obliged to give heaven for the prayers of an enemy? He may justly abhor your prayers, and all that you do in religion, as the flattery of a mortal enemy.

SECTION IX

Practical Improvement

HENCE we may learn,

1. How wonderful is the love that is manifested in giving Christ to die for us. For this is love to enemies. "While we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of his Son." How wonderful was the love of God the Father, in giving such a gift to those who not only could not be profitable to him, but were his enemies, and to so great a degree! They had great enmity against him; yet so did he love them, that he gave his own Son to lay down his life, in order to save their lives. Though they had enmity that sought to pull God down from his throne; yet he so loved them, that he sent down Christ from heaven, from his throne there, to be in the form of a servant; and instead of a throne of glory, gave him to be nailed to the cross, and to be laid in the grave, that so we might be brought to a throne of glory.

How wonderful was the love of Christ, in thus exercising dying love towards his enemies! He loved those that hated him, with hatred that sought to take away his life, so as voluntarily to lay down his life, that they might have life through him. "Herein is love; not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and laid down his life for us."

2. If we are all naturally God's enemies, hence we may learn what a spirit it becomes us as Christians to possess towards our enemies. Though we are enemies to God, yet we hope that God has loved us, that Christ has died for us, that God has forgiven or will forgive us; and will do us good, and bestow infinite mercies and blessings upon us, so as to make us happy . All this mercy we hope has been, or will be, exercised towards us forever

Certainly then, it will not become us to be bitter in our spirits against those that are enemies to us, and have injured and ill treated us; and though they have yet an ill spirit towards us. Seeing we depend so much on God's forgiving us, though enemies, we should exercise a spirit of forgiveness towards our enemies. And therefore our Savior inserted it in that prayer, which he dictated as a general directory to all; "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," to enforce the duty upon us, and to show us how reasonable it is. And we ought to love them even while enemies; for so we hope God hath done to us. We should be the children of our Father, who is kind to the unthankful and evil. Luke 6:35.

If we refuse thus to do, and are of another spirit, we may justly expect that God will deny us his mercy, as he had threatened! "If ye forgive men

their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Mat. 6:14, 15. The same we have in the parable of the man, who owed his lord ten thousand talents. Mat. 18:23-35.

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The Folly of Looking Back in Fleeing Out of Sodom

"Remember Lot's wife." **-- Luke 17:32**

Subject: We ought not to look back when we are flying out of Sodom.

Christ here foretells his coming in his kingdom, in answer to the question which the Pharisees asked him, viz. *When the kingdom of God should come*. And in what he says of his coming, he, evidently has respect to two things; his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, and his coming at the end of the world. He compares his coming at those times to the coming of God in two remarkable judgments that were past. First, [he compares] to that in the time of the flood; "and as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." Next, he compares it to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; "likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Then he immediately proceeds to direct his people how they should behave themselves at the appearance of the signal of that day's approach, referring especially to the destruction of Jerusalem. "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." In which words Christ shows that they should make the utmost haste to flee and get out of the city to the mountains, as he commands. Mat. 24:15, etc. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains; let him which is in the housetop not come down to take anything out of the house, neither let him which is in the field turn back to take his clothes."

Jerusalem was like Sodom, in that it was devoted to destruction by special divine wrath; and indeed to a more terrible destruction than that of Sodom. Therefore the like direction is given concerning fleeing out of it with the utmost haste, without looking behind, as the angel gave to Lot,

when he bid him flee out of Sodom. Gen. 19:17, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain.” And in the text, Christ enforces his counsel by the instance of Lot’s wife. He bids them remember her, and take warning by her, who looked back as she was fleeing out of Sodom, and became a pillar of salt.

If it be inquired why Christ gave this direction to his people to flee out of Jerusalem, in such exceeding haste, at the first notice of the signal of her approaching destruction; I answer, it seems to be, because fleeing out of Jerusalem was a type of fleeing out of a state of sin. Escaping out of that unbelieving city typified an escape out of a state of unbelief. Therefore they were directed to flee without staying to take anything out of their houses, to signify with what haste and concern we should flee out of a natural condition, that no respect to any worldly enjoyment should prevent us one moment, and that we should flee to Jesus Christ, the refuge of souls, our strong rock, and the mount of our defense, so as, in fleeing to him, to leave and forsake heartily all earthly things.

This seems to be the chief reason also why Lot was directed to make such haste, and not to look behind. Because his fleeing out of Sodom was designed on purpose to be a type of our fleeing from that state of sin and misery in which we naturally are.

DOCTRINE

We ought not to look back when we are fleeing out of Sodom. The following reasons may be sufficient to support this doctrine:

I. That Sodom is a city full of filthiness and abominations. It is full of those impurities that ought to be had in the utmost abhorrence and detestation by all. The inhabitants of it are a polluted company. They are all under the power and dominion of hateful lusts. All their faculties and affections are polluted with those wile dispositions that are unworthy of the human nature, that greatly debase it, that are exceedingly hateful to God, and that dreadfully incense his anger. Every kind of spiritual abomination abounds in it. There is nothing so hateful and abominable but that there it is to be found, and there it abounds.

Sodom is a city full of devils and all unclean spirits. There they have their rendezvous, and there they have their dominion. There they sport, and wallow in filthiness, as it is said of mystical Babylon, Rev. 18:2. Babylon is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. — Who would be of such a society? Who would not flee from such a city with the utmost haste, and never look back upon it, and never have the least inclination of returning?

Some in Sodom may seem to carry a fair face, and make a fair outward show. But if we could look into their hearts, they are everyone altogether filthy and abominable. We ought to flee from such a city, with the utmost abhorrence of the place and society, with no desires to dwell longer there, and never to discover the least inclination to return to it. But [we] should be desirous to get to the greatest possible distance from it, that we might in no wise be partakers in her abominations.

II. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because Sodom is a city appointed to destruction. The cry of the city hath reached up to heaven. The earth cannot bear such a burden as her inhabitants are. She will therefore disburden herself of them, and spew them out. God will not suffer such a city to stand; he will consume it. God is holy, and his nature is infinitely opposite to all such uncleanness. He will therefore be a consuming fire to it. The holiness of God will not suffer it to stand, and the majesty and justice of God require that the inhabitants of that city who thus offend and provoke him be destroyed. And God will surely destroy them. It is the immutable and irreversible decree of God. — He hath said it, and he will do it. The decree is gone forth, and so sure as there is a God, and he is almighty, and able to fulfill his decrees and threatenings, so surely will he destroy Sodom. Gen. 19:12, 13, “Whatsoever thou hast in this city, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.” And in verse 14, “Up, get ye out of this place, or the Lord will destroy this city.”

This city is an accursed city; it is destined to ruin. — Therefore, as we would not be partakers of her curse, and would not be destroyed, we should flee out of it, and not look behind us. Rev. 18:4, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her

plagues."

III. We ought not to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, because the destruction to which it is appointed is exceedingly dreadful; it is appointed to utter destruction, to be wholly and entirely consumed. It is appointed to suffer the wrath of the great God, which is to be poured down from God upon it, like a dreadful storm of fire and brimstone. This city is to be filled full of the wrath of God. Everyone that remains in it shall have the fire of God's wrath come down on his head and into his soul. He shall be full of fire and full of the wrath of the Almighty. He shall be encompassed with fire without and full of fire within. His head, his heart, his bowels, and all his limbs shall be full of fire, and not a drop of water to cool him.

Nor shall he have any place to flee to for relief. Go where he will, there is the fire of God's wrath. His destruction and torment will be inevitable. — He shall be destroyed without any pity. He shall cry aloud, but there shall be none to help, there shall be none to regard his lamentations, or to afford relief. The decree is gone forth, and the days come when Sodom shall burn as an oven, and all the inhabitants thereof shall be as stubble. As it was in the literal Sodom, the whole city was full of fire. In their houses there was no safety, for they were all on fire. And if they fled out into the streets, they also were full of fire. Fire continually came down out of heaven everywhere. — That was a dismal time. What a cry was there then in that city, in every part of it! But there was none to help. They had no where to go where they could hide their heads from fire. They had none to pity or relieve them. If they fled to their friends, they could not help them.

Now, with what haste should we flee from a city appointed to such a destruction! And how should we flee without looking behind us! How should it be our whole intent to get at the greatest distance from a city in such circumstances! How far should we be from thinking at all of returning to a city which has such wrath hanging over it!

IV. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed is an universal destruction. None that stay in it shall escape. None will have the good fortune to be in any by-corner, where the fire will not search them out. All

sorts, old and young, great and small, shall be destroyed. There shall be no exception of any age, or any sex, or any condition, but all shall perish together. Gen. 19:24, 25, “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” We therefore must not delay or look behind us; for there is no place of safety in Sodom, nor in all the plain on which Sodom is built. The mountain of safety is before us, and not behind us.

V. The destruction to which Sodom is appointed is an everlasting destruction. This is said of the literal Sodom, that it suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 7, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The destruction that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered was an eternal destruction. Those cities were destroyed, and have never been built since, and are not capable of being rebuilt; for the land on which they stood at the time of their destruction sunk, and has ever since been covered with the lake of Sodom or the Dead sea, or as it is called in Scripture, the *Salt sea*. This seems to have been thus ordered on purpose to be a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men. So that fire by which they were destroyed is called *eternal fire,* because it was so typically, it was a type of the eternal destruction of ungodly men; which may be in part what is intended, when it is said in that text in Jude, that they were set forth for an example, or for a type or representation of the eternal fire in which all the ungodly are to be consumed.

Sodom has in all ages since been covered with a lake which was first brought on it by fire and brimstone, to be a type of the lake of fire and brimstone in which ungodly men shall have their part forever and ever, as we read Rev. 20:15, and elsewhere. — We ought not therefore to look back when fleeing out of Sodom, seeing that the destruction to which it is appointed is an eternal destruction; for this renders the destruction infinitely dreadful.

VI. Sodom is a city appointed to swift and sudden destruction. The destruction is not only certain and inevitable, and infinitely dreadful, but

it will come speedily. “Their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not;” 2 Pet. 2:3. And so Deu. 32:35, “The day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.” — The storm of wrath, the black clouds of divine vengeance, even now every moment hang over them, just ready to break forth and come down in a dreadful manner upon them. God hath already whet his sword and bent his bow, and made ready his arrow on the string, Psa. 7:12. Therefore we should make haste, and not look behind us. For if we linger and stop to look back, and flee not for our lives, there is great danger that we shall be involved in the common ruin.

The destruction of Sodom is not only swift, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. — It seems to have been a fair morning in Sodom before it was destroyed, Gen. 19:23. It seems that there were no clouds to be seen, no appearance of any storm at all, much less of a storm of fire and brimstone. The inhabitants of Sodom expected no such thing. Even when Lot told his sons-in-law of it, they would not believe it, Gen. 19:14. — They were making merry. Their hearts were at ease, they though nothing of such a calamity at hand. But it came at once, as travail upon a woman with child, and there was no escaping. As verse 28, 29 [says], “They did eat, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”

So it is with wicked men. Psa. 73:19, “How are they brought into desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.” — If therefore we linger and look back, we may be suddenly overtaken and seized with destruction.

VII. There is nothing in Sodom that is worth looking back upon. All the enjoyments of Sodom will soon perish in the common destruction; all will be burnt up. And surely it is not worth the while to look back on things that are perishing and consuming in the flames, as it is with all the enjoyments of sin. They are all appointed to the fire. Therefore it is foolish for any who are fleeing out of Sodom to hanker any more after them. For when they are burnt up, what good can they do? And is it worth the while for us to return back for the sake of a moment’s enjoyment of them, before they are burnt, and so expose ourselves to be burnt up with

them?

Lot's wife looked back, because she remembered the pleasant things that she left in Sodom. She hankered after them. She could not but look back with a wishful eye upon the city, where she had lived in such ease and pleasure. Sodom was a place of great outward plenty. They ate the fat, and drank the sweet. The soil about Sodom was exceedingly fruitful. It is said to be as *the garden of God*, Gen. 13:10. And *fullness of bread* was one of the sins of the place, Eze. 16:49.

Here Lot and his wife lived plentifully; and it was a place where the inhabitants wallowed in carnal pleasures and delights. But however much it abounded in these things, what were they worth now, when the city was burning? Lot's wife was very foolish in lingering in her escape, for the sake of things which were all on fire. — So the enjoyments, the profits, and pleasures of sin, have the wrath and curse of God on them. Brimstone is scattered on them. Hell-fire is ready to kindle on them. It is not therefore worth while for any person to look back after such things.

VIII. We are warned by messengers sent to us from God to make haste in our flight from Sodom, and not to look behind us. God sends to us his ministers, the angels of the churches, on this grand errand, as he sent the angels to warn Lot and his wife to flee for their lives, Gen. 19:15, 16. — If we delay or look back, now that we have had such fair warning, we shall be exceedingly inexcusable and monstrously foolish.

APPLICATION

The use that I would make of this doctrine, is to warn those who are in a natural condition to flee out of it, and by no means to look back. While you are out of Christ you are in Sodom. The whole history of the destruction of Sodom, with all its circumstances, seems to be inserted in the Scriptures for our warning, and is set forth for an example, as the apostle Jude says; It in a lively manner typifies the case of natural men, the destruction of those that continue in a natural state, and the manner of their escape who flee to Christ. The psalmist, when speaking of the appointed punishment of ungodly men, seems evidently to refer to the destruction of Sodom. Psa. 11:6, "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares,

fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: This shall be the portion of their cup."

Consider therefore, you that are seeking an interest in Christ, you are to flee out of Sodom. Sodom is the place of your nativity, and the place where you have spent your lives. You are citizens of that city which is full of filthiness and abomination before God, that polluted and accursed city. You belong to that impure society. You not only live among them, but you are of them, you have committed those abominations, and have so provoked God as you have heard. It is you that I have all this while been speaking of under this doctrine. You are the inhabitants of Sodom. Perhaps you may look on your circumstances as not very dreadful; but you dwell in Sodom. — Though you may be reformed, and appear with a clean outside, and a smooth face to the world; yet as long as you are in a natural condition, you are impure inhabitants of Sodom.

The world of mankind is divided into two companies, or, as I may say, into two cities. There is the city of Zion, the church of God, the holy and the beloved city. And there is Sodom, that polluted and accursed city, which is appointed to destruction. You belong to the latter of these. How much soever you may look upon yourselves as better than some others, you are of the same city; the same company with fornicators, and drunkards, and adulterers, and common swearers, and highwaymen, and pirates, and Sodomites. How much soever you may think yourselves distinguished, as long as you are out of Christ, you belong to the very same society. You are of the company, you join with them, and are no better than they, any otherwise than as you have greater restraints. You are considered in the sight of God as fit to be ranked with them. You and they are altogether the objects of loathing and abhorrence, and have the wrath of God abiding on you. You will go with them and be destroyed with them, if you do not escape from your present state. Yea, you are of the same society and the same company with the devils, for Sodom is not only the city of wicked men, but it is the hold of every foul spirit.

You belong to that city which is appointed to an awful, inevitable, universal, swift, and sudden destruction; a city that hath a storm of fire and wrath hanging over it. Many of you are convinced of the awful state you are in while in Sodom, and are making some attempts to escape from

the wrath which hangs over it. Let such be warned by what has been said, to escape for their lives, and not to look back. Look not back, unless you choose to have a share in the burning tempest that is coming down on that city. — Look not back in remembrance of the enjoyments which you have had in Sodom, as hankering after the pleasant things which you have had there, after the ease, the security, and the pleasure which you have there enjoyed.

Remember Lot's wife, for she looked back, as being loth utterly and forever to leave the ease, the pleasure, and plenty which she enjoyed in Sodom, and as having a mind to return to them again; remember what became of her. — Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness, who were desirous of going back again into Egypt. Num. 11:5, "We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks and onions, and the garlick." Remember what was the issue. You must be willing forever to leave all the ease, and pleasure, and profit of sin, to forsake all the salvation, as Lot forsook all, and left all he had, to escape out of Sodom.

And further to enforce this warning, let me entreat all you who are in this state to consider the several things which I shall now mention.

I. The destruction of which you are in danger is infinitely more dreadful than that destruction of the literal Sodom from which Lot fled. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in a storm of fire and brimstone was but a shadow of the destruction of ungodly men in hell, and is no more to it than a shadow or a picture is to a reality, or than painted fire is to real fire. The misery of hell is set forth by various shadows and images in Scripture, as blackness of darkness, a never-dying worm, a furnace of fire, a lake of fire and brimstone, the torments of the valley of the son of Hinnom, a storm of fire and brimstone. The reason why so many similitudes are used is because none of them are sufficient. Anyone does but partly and very imperfectly represent the truth, and therefore God makes use of many.

You have therefore much more need to make haste in your escape, and not look behind you, than Lot and his wife had when they fled out of Sodom. For you are every day and every moment in danger of a thousand

times more dreadful storm coming on your heads, than that which came on Sodom, when the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven upon them. So that it will be vastly more sottish in you to look back than it was in Lot's wife.

II. The destruction of which you are in danger is not only greater than the temporal destruction of Sodom, but greater than the eternal destruction of the inhabitants of Sodom. For however well you may think you have behaved yourselves, you who have continued impenitent under the glorious gospel, have sinned more, and provoked God far more, and have greater guilt upon you, than the inhabitants of Sodom; although you may seem to yourselves, and perhaps to others, to be very harmless creatures. Mat. 10:15, "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

III. Multitudes, while they have been looking back, have been suddenly overtaken and seized by the storm of wrath. The wrath of God hath not delayed, while they have delayed; it has not waited at all for them to turn about and flee; but has presently seized them, and they have been past hope. When Lot's wife looked back, she was immediately destroyed. God had exercised patience toward her before. When she lingered at the setting out, the angels pressed her, and her husband and children, to make haste. Not only so, but when they yet delayed, they brought her forth, and set her without the city, the Lord being merciful to her. But now when, notwithstanding this mercy, and the warnings which had been given her, she looked back, God exercised no more patience towards her, but proceeded immediately to put her to death.

Now God has in like manner been merciful to you. You in time past have been lingering; you have been warned by the angel of your danger, and pressed to make haste and flee; yet you have delayed. And now at length God hath as it were laid hold on you, by the convictions of his spirit, to draw you out of Sodom; *and therefore remember Lot's wife*. If now, after all, you should look back, when God hath been so merciful to you, you will have reason to fear, that God will suddenly destroy you. Multitudes, when they have been looking back, and putting off to another time, have never had another opportunity; they have been suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

IV. If you look back, and live long after it, there will be great danger that you will never get any further. The only way to seek salvation is to press forward with all your might, and still to look and press forward, never to stand still or slacken your pace. When Lot's wife stopped in her flight and stood still in order that she might look, her punishment was, that there she was to stand forever; she never got any further; she never got beyond that place. But there she stood as a pillar of salt, a durable pillar and monument of wrath, for her folly and wickedness.

So it was very often with backsliders, though they may live a considerable time after. When they look back, after they have been taking pains for their salvation, they lose all, they put themselves under vast disadvantages. By quenching the Spirit of God, and losing their convictions, they dreadfully harden their own hearts, and stupefy their souls. They make way for discouragements, dreadfully strengthen and establish the interest of sin in their hearts, many ways give Satan great advantages to ruin them, and provoke God oftentimes utterly to leave them to hardness of heart. When they come to look back, their souls presently become dead and hard like the body of Lot's wife. And though they live long after, they never get any further. It is worse for them than if they were immediately damned. When persons in fleeing out of Sodom look back, their last case is far worse than the first; Mat. 12:43, 44, 45. And experience confirms, that none ordinarily are so hard to be brought to penance as backsliders.

V. It may well stir you up to flee for your lives, and not to look behind you, when you consider how many have lately fled to the mountains, while you yet remain in Sodom. To what multitudes hath God given the wisdom to flee to Christ, the mountain of safety! They have fled to the little city Zoar, which God will spare and never destroy. How many have you seen of all sorts resorting out of Sodom thither, as believing the Word of God by the angels, that God would surely destroy that place. They are in a safe condition. They are got out of the reach of the storm. The fire and brimstone can do them no hurt there.

But you yet remain in that cursed city among that accursed company. You are yet in Sodom, which God is about so terribly to destroy, where you are

in danger every minute of having snares, fire, and brimstone, come down on your head. — Though so many have obtained, yet you have not obtained deliverance. Good has come but you have seen none of it. Others are happy, but no man knows what will become of you. You have no part nor lot in the glorious salvation of souls, which has lately been among us. — The consideration of this should stir you up effectually to escape, and in your escape to press forward — still to press forward — and to resolve to press forward forever, let what will be in the way, to hearken to no temptation, and never to look back, or in any wise slacken or abate your endeavors as long as you live, but if possible to increase in them more and more.

VI. Backsliding after such a time as this, *1* will have a vastly greater tendency to seal a man's damnation than at another time. The greater means men have, the louder calls and the greater advantages they are under, the more dangerous is backsliding, the more it has a tendency to enhance guilt, to provoke God, and to harden the heart.

We, in this land of light, have long enjoyed greater advantages than most of the world. But the advantages which persons are under now for their salvation, are perhaps tenfold what they have been at such times as we have ordinarily lived in. And backsliding will be proportionably the greater sin, and the more dangerous to the soul. You have seen God's glory and his wonders amongst us, in a most marvelous manner. — If therefore you look back after this, there will be great danger that God will swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest; as God sware concerning them that were for going back into Egypt, after they had seen the wonders which God wrought for Israel. Num. 14:22, 23, "Because all those men that have seen my glory and my miracles that I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." — The wonders that we have seen among us of late, have been of a more glorious nature than those that the children of Israel saw in Egypt and in the wilderness.

VII. We know not but that great part of the wicked world are, at this day, in Sodom's circumstances, when Lot fled out of it; having some outward,

temporal destruction hanging over it. It looks as if some great thing were coming; the state of things in the world seems to be ripe for some great revolution. The world has got to such a terrible degree of wickedness, that it is probable the cry of it has reached up to heaven. And it is hardly probable that God will suffer things to go on, as they now do, much longer. It is likely that God will ere long appear in awful majesty to vindicate his own cause. And then none will be safe that are out of Christ. Now therefore everyone should flee for his life, and escape to the mountain, lest he be consumed. We cannot certainly tell what God is about to do, but this we may know, that those who are out of Christ are in a most unsafe state.

VIII. To enforce this warning against looking back, let me beseech you to consider the exceeding proneness to it there is in the heart. The heart of man is a backsliding heart. There is in the heart a great love and hankering desire after the ease, pleasure, and enjoyments of Sodom, as there was in Lot's wife, by which persons are continually liable to temptations to look back. The heart is so much towards Sodom, that it is a difficult thing to keep the eye from turning that way, and the feet from tending thither. When men under convictions are put upon fleeing, it is a mere force. It is because God lays hold on their hands, as he did on Lot's and his wife's, and drags them so far. But the tendency of the heart is to go back to Sodom.

Persons are very prone to backsliding also through discouragement. The heart is unsteady, soon tired, and apt to listen to discouraging temptations. A little difficulty and delay soon overcome its feeble resolutions. And discouragement tends to backsliding. It weakens persons' hands, lies as a dead weight on their hearts, and makes them drag heavily; and if it continue long, it very often issues insecurity and senselessness. Convictions are often shaken off that way. They begin first to go off with discouragement.

Backsliding is a disease that is exceeding secret in its way of working. It is a flattering distemper. It works like a consumption, wherein persons often flatter themselves that they are not worse, but something better, and in a hopeful way to recover, till a few days before they die. So backsliding commonly comes on gradually, and steals on men insensibly,

and they still flatter themselves that they are not backslidden. — They plead that they are seeking yet, and they hope they have not lost their convictions. And by the time they find it out, and cannot pretend so any longer, they are commonly so far gone, that they care not much if they have lost their convictions. And when it is come to that, it is commonly a gone case as to those convictions. Thus they blind themselves, and keep themselves insensible of their own disease, and so are not terrified with it, nor awakened to use means for relief, till it is past cure.

Thus it is that backsliding commonly comes upon persons that have for some time been under any considerable convictions, and afterwards lose them. Let the consideration of this your danger excite you to the greatest care and diligence to keep your hearts, and to watchfulness and constant prayer against backsliding. And let it put you upon endeavors to strengthen your resolutions of guarding against everything that tends to the contrary, that you may indeed hold out to the end, for *then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord.*

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God's Awful Judgment in the Breaking and Withering of the Strong Rods of a Community

"Her strong rods were broken and withered." -- **Ezekiel 19:12**

When God by death removes from a people those in place of public authority and rule that have been as strong rods, 'tis an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation.

In order to a right understanding and improvement of these words, these four things must be observed concerning them.

1. Who she is that is here represented as having had strong rods, *viz.* the Jewish community, who here, as often elsewhere, is called the people's mother. She is here compared to a vine planted in a very fruitful soil, verse 10. The Jewish church and state is often elsewhere compared to a vine; as in Psa. 80:8, etc.; Isa. 5:2; Jer. 2:21; Eze. 15, 17:6.

2. What is meant by her strong rods, viz. her wise, able, and well qualified magistrates or rulers. That the rulers or magistrates are intended is manifest by verse 11, "And she had strong rods for the scepters of them that bear rule." And by rods that were strong, must be meant such rulers as were well qualified for magistracy, such as had great abilities and other qualifications fitting them for the business of rule. They were wont to choose a rod or staff of the strongest and hardest sort of wood that could be found, for the mace or scepter of a prince; such a one only being counted fit for that use; and this generally was overlaid with gold.

It is very remarkable that such a strong rod should grow out of a weak vine. But so it had been in Israel, through God's extraordinary blessing, in times past. Though the nation is spoken of here, and frequently elsewhere, as weak and helpless in itself, and entirely dependent as a vine, the weakest of all trees, that cannot support itself by its own strength, and never stands but as it leans on or hangs by something else that is stronger than itself; yet God has caused many of her sons to be strong rods fit for scepters; he has raised up in Israel many able and excellent princes and magistrates, who had done worthily in their day.

3. It should be understood and observed what is meant by these strong rods being broken and withered, *viz.* these able and excellent rulers being removed by death. Men's dying is often compared in Scripture to the withering of the growth of the earth.

4. It should be observed after what manner the breaking and withering of these strong rods is here spoken of, *viz.* as a great and awful calamity, that God had brought upon that people. It is spoken of as one of the chief effects of God's dreadful displeasure against them; "But she was plucked

up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire hath consumed them." The great benefits she enjoyed while her strong rods remained, are represented in the preceding verse; "And she had strong rods for the scepters of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches; and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches." And the terrible calamities that attended the breaking and withering of her strong rods, are represented in the two verses next following the text; "And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit." And in the conclusion in the next words, is very emphatically declared the worthiness of such a dispensation to be greatly lamented; "So that she hath no strong rod to be a scepter to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

That which I therefore observe from the words of the text, to be the subject of discourse at this time, is this, *viz.* When God by death removes from a people those in place of public authority and rule that have been as strong rods, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation.

In discoursing on this proposition, I would:

I. Show what kind of rulers may fitly be called strong rods.

II. Show why the removal of such rulers from a people by death is to be looked upon as an awful judgment of God on that people, and is greatly to be lamented.

I. I would observe what qualifications of those who are in public authority and rule may properly give them the denomination of strong rods.

First, one qualification of rulers whence they may properly be denominated strong rods, is a great ability for the management of public

affairs. This is the case, when they who stand in a place of public authority are men of great natural abilities, men of uncommon strength of reason and largeness of understanding; especially when they have a remarkable genius for government, a peculiar turn of mind fitting them to gain an extraordinary understanding in things of that nature. They have ability, in an especial manner, for insight into the mysteries of government, and for discerning those things wherein the public welfare or calamity consists, and the proper means to avoid the one and promote the other. [It is] an extraordinary talent at distinguishing what is right and just, from that which is wrong and unequal, and to see through the false colors with which injustice is often disguised, and unravel the false and subtle arguments and cunning sophistry that is often made use of to defend iniquity. They have not only great natural abilities in these respects, but their abilities and talents have been improved by study, learning, observation, and experience. By these means, they have obtained great actual knowledge. They have acquired great skill in public affairs, and things requisite to be known in order to their wise, prudent, and effectual management. They have obtained a great understanding of men and things, a great knowledge of human nature, and of the way of accommodating themselves to it, so as most effectually to influence it to wise purposes. They have obtained a very extensive knowledge of men with whom they are concerned in the management of public affairs, either those who have a joint concern in government, or those who are to be governed; and they have also obtained a very full and particular understanding of the state and circumstances of the country or people of whom they have the care, and know well their laws and constitution, and what their circumstances require. Likewise, they have a great knowledge of the people of neighboring nations, states, or provinces, with whom they have occasion to be concerned in the management of public affairs committed to them. These things all contribute to render those who are in authority fit to be denominated “strong rods.”

Second, when they have not only great understanding, but largeness of heart, and a greatness and nobleness of disposition, this is another qualification that belongs to the character of a “strong rod.”

Those that are by Divine Providence set in a place of public authority and

rule, are called “gods, and sons of the Most High,” Psa. 82:6. And therefore it is peculiarly unbecoming them to be of a mean spirit, a disposition that will admit of their doing those things that are sordid and vile; as when they are persons of a narrow, private spirit, that may be found in little tricks and intrigues to promote their private interest. Such will shamefully defile their hands to gain a few pounds, are not ashamed to grind the faces of the poor, and screw their neighbors; and will take advantage of their authority or commission to line their pockets with what is fraudulently taken or withheld from others. When a man in authority is of such a mean spirit, it weakens his authority, and makes him justly contemptible in the eyes of men, and is utterly inconsistent with his being a strong rod.

But on the contrary, it greatly establishes his authority, and causes others to stand in awe of him, when they see him to be a man of greatness of mind, one that abhors those things that are mean and sordid, and not capable of a compliance with them: one that is of a public spirit, and not of a private narrow disposition; a man of honor, and not of mean artifice and clandestine management, for filthy lucre; one that abhors trifling and impertinence, or to waste away his time, that should be spent in the service of God, his king, and his country, in vain amusements and diversions, and in the pursuit of the gratifications of sensual appetites. God charges the rulers in Israel, that pretended to be their great and mighty men, with being mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. There does not seem to be any reference to their being men of strong heads, and able to bear a great deal of strong drink, as some have supposed. There is a severe sarcasm in the words; for the prophet is speaking of the great men, princes, and judges in Israel (as appears by the verse next following), which should be mighty men, strong rods, men of eminent qualifications, excelling in nobleness of spirit, of glorious strength and fortitude of mind. But instead of that, they were mighty or eminent for nothing but gluttony and drunkenness.

Third, when those that are in authority are endowed with much of a spirit of government, this is another thing that entitles them to the denomination of “strong rods.” They not only are men of great understanding and wisdom in affairs that appertain to government, but

have also a peculiar talent at using their knowledge, and exerting themselves in this great and important business, according to their great understanding in it. They are men of eminent fortitude, are not afraid of the faces of men, and are not afraid to do the part that properly belongs to them as rulers, though they meet with great opposition, and the spirits of men are greatly irritated by it. They have a spirit of resolution and activity, so as to keep the wheels of government in proper motion, and to cause judgment and justice to run down as a mighty stream. They have not only a great knowledge of government, and the things that belong to it in theory, but it is, as it were, natural to them to apply the various powers and faculties with which God has endowed them, and the knowledge they have obtained by study and observation, to that business, so as to perform it most advantageously and effectually.

Fourth, stability and firmness of integrity, fidelity, and piety, in the exercise of authority, is another thing that greatly contributes to, and is very essential in, the character of a "strong rod."

He is not only a man of strong reason and great discerning to know what is just, but is a man of strict integrity and righteousness, firm and immovable in the execution of justice and judgment. He is not only a man of great ability to bear down vice and immorality, but has a disposition agreeable to such ability. He is one that has a strong aversion to wickedness, and is disposed to use the power God has put into his hands to suppress it. He is one that not only opposes vice by his authority, but by his example. He is one of inflexible fidelity, who will be faithful to God whose minister he is, to his people for good, and who is immovable in his regard to his supreme authority, his commands and his glory; and will be faithful to his king and country. He will not be induced by the many temptations that attend the business of men in public authority, basely to betray his trust; will not consent to do what he thinks not to be for the public good, for his own gain or advancement, or any private interest. He is well principled, and firm in acting agreeably to his principles, and will not be prevailed with to do otherwise through fear of favor, to follow a multitude, or to maintain his interest in any on whom he depends for the honor or profit of his place, whether it be prince or people; and is also one of that strength of mind, whereby he rules his own spirit. These things

very eminently contribute to a ruler's title to the denomination of a "strong rod."

Fifth, and *lastly,* it also contributes to that strength of a man in authority by which he may be denominated a "strong rod," when he is in such circumstances as give him advantage for the exercise of his strength for the public good; as his being a person of honorable descent, of a distinguished education, a man of estate, one advanced in years, one that has long been in authority, so that it is become as it were natural for the people to pay him deference, to reverence him, to be influenced and governed by him, and to submit to his authority. And add to this, his being extensively known, and much honored and regarded abroad; his being one of a good presence, majesty of countenance, decency of behavior, becoming one of authority; of forcible speech, etc. These things add to his strength, and increase his ability and advantage to serve his generation in the place of a ruler, and therefore serve to render him one that is the more fitly and eminently called a "strong rod." — I now proceed,

II. To show that when such strong rods are broken and withered by death, it is an awful judgment of God on the people who are deprived of them, and worthy of great lamentation. — And that on two accounts.

First, by reason of the many positive benefits and blessings to a people that such rulers are the instrument of.

Almost all the prosperity of a public society and civil community does, under God, depend on their rulers. They are like the main springs or wheels in a machine, that keep every part in its due motion, and are in the body politic, as the vitals in the body natural, and as the pillars and foundation in a building. Civil rules are called "the foundations of the earth." Psa. 82, and 11:3.

The prosperity of a people depends more on their rulers than is commonly imagined. As they have the public society under the care and power, so they have advantage to promote the public interest every way.

And if they are such rulers as have been described, they are some of the greatest blessings to the public. Their influence has a tendency to promote wealth, and cause temporal possessions and blessings to abound; and to promote virtue amongst them, and so to unite them one to another in peace and mutual benevolence, and make them happy in society, each one the instrument of his neighbors' quietness, comfort, and prosperity; and by these means to advance their reputation and honor in the world; and which is much more, to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. Therefore, the wise man says, Ecc. 10:17, "Blessed art thou, O land, when they king is the son of nobles."

We have a remarkable instance and evidence of the happy and great influence of such a strong rod as had been described, to promote the universal prosperity of a people, in the history of the reign of Solomon, though many of the people were uneasy under his government, and thought him too rigorous in his administrations, see 1 Kin. 12:4. "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon." 1 Kin. 4:25. "And he made silver to be among them as stones for abundance." Chap. 10:27. "And Judah and Israel were many, eating and drinking and making merry." 1 Kin. 4:20. The queen of Sheba admired, and was greatly affected with, the happiness of the people, under the government of such a strong rod. 1 Kin. 10:8, 9, "Happy are the men (says she), happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

The flourishing state of the kingdom of Judah, while they had strong rods for the scepters of them that bare rule, is taken notice of in our context; "her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches."

Such rulers are eminently the ministers of God to his people for good. They are great gifts of the Most High to a people, blessed tokens of his favor, and vehicles of his goodness to them; and therein are images of his own Son, the grand medium of all God's goodness to fallen mankind. Therefore, all of them are called, sons of the Most High. All civil rulers, if

they are as they ought to be, such strong rods as have been described, will be like the Son of the Most High, vehicles of good to mankind, and like him, will be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. And therefore, when a people are bereaved of them, they sustain an unspeakable loss, and are the subjects of a judgment of God that is greatly to be lamented.

Second, on account of the great calamities such rulers are a defense from. Innumerable are the grievous and fatal calamities which public societies are exposed to in this evil world, from which they can have no defense without order and authority. If a people are without government, they are like a city broken down and without walls, encompassed on every side by enemies, and become unavoidably subject to all manner of confusion and misery.

Government is necessary to defend communities from miseries from within themselves; from the prevalence of intestine discord, mutual injustice, and violence. The members of the society continually making a prey one of another, without any defense from each other. Rulers are the heads of union in public societies, that hold the parts together; without which nothing else is to be expected than that the members of the society will be continually divided against themselves, everyone acting the part of an enemy to his neighbor, everyone's hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; going on in remediless and endless broils and jarring, until the society be utterly dissolved and broken in pieces, and life itself, in the neighborhood of our fellow-creatures, becomes miserable and intolerable.

We may see the need of government in societies by what is visible in families, those lesser societies, of which all public societies are constituted. How miserable would these little societies be, if all were left to themselves, without any authority or superiority in one above another, or any head of union and influence among them? We may be convinced by what we see of the lamentable consequences of the want of a proper exercise of authority and maintenance of government in families, which yet are not absolutely without all authority. No less need is there of government in public societies, but much more, as they are larger. A very

few may possibly, without any government, act by concert, so as to concur in what shall be for the welfare of the whole; but this is not to be expected among a multitude, constituted of many thousands, of a great variety of tempers and different interests.

As government is absolutely necessary, so there is a necessity of strong rods in order to it: the business being such as requires persons so qualified; no other being sufficient for, or well capable of, the government of public societies: and therefore, those public societies are miserable that have not such strong rods for scepters to rule, Ecc. 10:16, “Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.”

As government, and strong rods for the exercise of it, are necessary to preserve public societies from dreadful and fatal calamities arising from among themselves; so no less requisite are they to defend the community from foreign enemies. As they are like the pillars of a building, so they are also like the walls and bulwarks of a city. They are, under God, the main strength of a people in the time of war, and the chief instruments of their preservation, safety, and rest. This is signified in a very lively manner in the words that are used by the Jewish community in her lamentations, to express the expectations she had from her princes, Lam. 4:20, “The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.” In this respect also such strong rods are sons of the Most High, and images or resemblances of the Son of God, *viz.* as they are their saviors from their enemies; as the judges that God raised up of old in Israel are called, Neh. 9:27, “Therefore thou deliverest them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to they manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.”

Thus both the prosperity and safety of a people under God, depends on such rulers as are *strong rods*. While they enjoy such blessings, they are wont to be like a vine planted in a fruitful soil, with her stature exalted among the thick branches, appearing in her height with the multitude of her branches; but when they have no strong rod to be a scepter to rule, they are like a vine planted in a wilderness that is exposed to be plucked

up, and cast down to the ground, to have her fruit dried up with the east wind, and to have fire coming out of her own branches to devour her fruit.

On these accounts, when a people's strong rods are broken and withered, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation: as when king Josiah (who was doubtless one of the strong rods referred to in the text) was dead, the people made great lamentation for him. 2 Chr. 35:24, 25, "And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchers of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations."

APPLICATION

I come now to apply these things to our own case, under the late awful frown of Divine Providence upon us, in removing by death that honorable person in public rule and authority, an inhabitant of his town, and belonging to this congregation and church, who died at Boston the last Lord's day.

He was eminently a strong rod in the forementioned respects. As to his natural abilities, strength of reason, greatness and clearness of discerning, and depth of penetration, he was one of the first rank. It may be doubted whether he has left his superior in these respects in these parts of the world. He was a man of a truly great genius, and his genius was peculiarly fitted for the understanding and managing of public affairs.

And as his natural capacity was great, so was the knowledge that he had acquired, his understanding being greatly improved by close application of mind to those things he was called to be concerned in, and by a very exact observation of them, and long experience in them. He had indeed a great insight into the nature of public societies, the mysteries of government, and the affairs of peace and war. He had a discernment that very few have of those things wherein the public weal consists, and what

those things are that expose public societies; and of the proper means to avoid the latter, and promote the former. He was quick in his discerning, in that in most cases, especially such as belonged to his proper business, he at first sight would see further than most men when they had done their best. But yet he had a wonderful faculty of improving his own thoughts by meditation, and carrying his views a greater and greater length by long and close application of mind. He had an extraordinary ability to distinguish right and wrong, in the midst of intricacies, and circumstances that tended to perplex and darken the case. He was able to weigh things as it were in a balance, and to distinguish those things that were solid and weighty from those that had only a fair show without substance; which he evidently discovered in his accurate, clear, and plain way of stating and committing causes to a jury, from the bench, as by others hath been observed. He wonderfully distinguished truth from falsehood, and the most labored cases seemed always to lie clear in his mind, his ideas being properly ranged. And he had a talent of communicating them to everyone's understanding, beyond almost anyone. If any were misguided, it was not because truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were not well distinguished.

He was probably one of the ablest politicians that ever New England bred. He had a very uncommon insight into human nature, and a marvelous ability to penetrate into the particular tempers and dispositions of such as he had to deal with, and to discern the fittest way of treating them, so as most effectually to influence them to any good and wise purpose.

And never perhaps was there a person that had a more extensive and thorough knowledge of the state of his land, and its public affairs, and of persons that were jointly concerned with him in them. He knew this people, and their circumstances, and what their circumstances required. He discerned the diseases of this body, and what were the proper remedies, as an able and masterly physician. He had a great acquaintance with the neighboring colonies, and also the nations on this continent, with whom we are concerned in our public affairs. He had a far greater knowledge than any other person in the land, of the several nations of Indians in these northern parts of America, their tempers, manners, and

the proper way of treating them. [He] was more extensively known by them than any other person in the country. And no other person in authority in this province had such an acquaintance with the people and country of Canada, the land of our enemies, as he had.

He was exceeding far from a disposition and forwardness to intermeddle with other people's business. But as to what belonged to his proper business, in the office he sustained, and the important affairs of which he had the care, he had a great understanding of what belonged to them. I have often been surprised at the length of his reach, and what I have seen of his ability to foresee and determine the consequences of things, even at a great distance, and quite beyond the sight of other men. He was not wavering and unsteady in his opinion. His manner was never to pass a judgment rashly, but was wont first thoroughly to deliberate and weigh an affair; and in this, notwithstanding his great abilities, he was glad to improve by the help of conversation and discourse with others (and often spake of the great advantage he found by it), but when, on mature consideration, he had settled his judgment, he was not easily turned from it by false colors, and plausible pretenses and appearances.

And besides his knowledge of things belonging to his particular calling as a ruler, he had also a great degree of understanding in things belonging to his general calling as a Christian. He was no inconsiderable divine. He was a wise casuist, as I know by the great help I have found from time to time by his judgment and advice in cases of conscience, wherein I have consulted him. And indeed I scarce knew the divine that I ever found more able to help and enlighten the mind in such cases than he. And he had no small degree of knowledge in things pertaining to experimental religion. But was wont to discourse on such subjects, not only with accurate doctrinal distinctions, but as one intimately and feelingly acquainted with these things.

He was not only great in speculative knowledge, but his knowledge was practical; such as tended to a wise conduct in the affairs, business, and duties of life; so as properly to have the denomination of wisdom, and so as properly and eminently to invest him with the character of a wise man. And he was not only eminently wise and prudent in his own conduct, but was one of the ablest and wisest counselors of others in any difficult

affair.

The greatness and honorableness of his disposition was answerable to the largeness of his understanding. He was naturally of a great mind; in this respect he was truly the son of nobles. He greatly abhorred things which were mean and sordid, and seemed to be incapable of a compliance with them. How far was he from trifling and impertinence in his conversation! How far from a busy, meddling disposition! How far from any sly and clandestine management to fill his pockets with what was fraudulently withheld, or violently squeezed, from the laborer, soldier, or inferior officer! How far from taking advantage from his commission or authority, or any superior power he had in his hands; or the ignorance, dependence, or necessities of others; to add to his own gains with what properly belonged to them, and with what they might justly expect as a proper reward for any of their services! How far was he from secretly taking bribes offered to induce him to favor any man in his cause, or by his power or interest to promote his being advanced to any place of public trust, honor, or profit! How greatly did he abhor lying and prevarication! And how immovably steadfast was he to exact truth! His hatred of those things that were mean and sordid was so apparent and well known, that it was evident that men dreaded to appear in anything of that nature in his presence.

He was a man of a remarkably public spirit, a true lover of his country, and who greatly abhorred sacrificing the public welfare to private interest. — He was very eminently endowed with a spirit of government. The God of nature seemed to have formed him for government, as though he had been made on purpose, and cast into a mold, by which he should be every way fitted for the business of a man in public authority. Such a behavior and conduct was natural to him, as tended to maintain his authority, and possess others with awe and reverence, and to enforce and render effectual what he said and did in the exercise of his authority. He did not bear the sword in vain. He was truly a terror to evildoers. What I saw in him often put me in mind of that saying of the wise man. Pro. 20:8, “The king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.” He was one that was not afraid of the faces of men; and everyone knew that it was in vain to attempt to deter him from doing

what, on mature consideration, he had determined he ought to do. — Everything in him was great, and becoming a man in his public station. Perhaps never was there a man that appeared in New England to whom the denomination of *a great man* did more properly belong.

But though he was one that was great among men, exalted above others in abilities and greatness of mind, and in the place of rule, and feared not the faces of men, yet he feared God. He was strictly conscientious in his conduct, both in public and private. I never knew the man that seemed more steadfastly and immovably to act by principle, and according to rules and maxims, established and settled in his mind by the dictates of his judgment and conscience. He was a man of strict justice and fidelity. Faithfulness was eminently his character. Some of his greatest opponents that have been of the contrary party to him in public affairs, yet have openly acknowledged this of him, that he was a faithful man. He was remarkably faithful in his public trusts. He would not basely betray his trust, from fear or favor. It was in vain to expect it. However men might oppose him or neglect him, and how great soever they were: nor would he neglect the public interest committed to him, for the sake of his own ease, but diligently and laboriously watched and labored for it night and day. And he was faithful in private affairs as well as public. He was a most faithful friend; faithful to anyone that in any case asked his counsel. His fidelity might be depended upon in whatever affair he undertook for any of his neighbors.

He was a noted instance of the virtue of temperance, unalterable in it, in all places, in all companies, and in the midst of all temptations. Though he was a man of great spirit, yet he had a remarkable government of his spirit; and excelled in the government of his tongue. In the midst of all provocations from multitudes he had to deal with, and the great multiplicity of perplexing affairs in which he was concerned, and all the opposition and reproaches of which he was at any time the subject; yet what was there that ever proceeded out of his mouth that his enemies could lay hold of? [He had] no profane language, no vain, rash, unseemly, and unchristian speeches. If at any time he expressed himself with great warmth and vigor, it seemed to be from principle and determination of judgment, rather than from passion. When he expressed himself strongly,

and with vehemence, those that were acquainted with him, and well observed him from time to time, might evidently see it was done in consequence of thought and judgment, weighing the circumstances and consequences of things.

The calmness and steadiness of his behavior in private, particularly in his family, appeared remarkable and exemplary to those who had most opportunity to observe. He was thoroughly established in those religious principles and doctrines of the first fathers of New England, usually called the *doctrines of grace*, and had a great detestation of the opposite errors of the present fashionable divinity, as very contrary to the Word of God, and the experience of every true Christian. And as he was a friend to truth, so he was a friend to vital piety and the power of godliness, and ever countenanced and favored it on all occasions.

He abhorred profaneness, and was a person of a serious and decent spirit, and ever treated sacred things with reverence. He was exemplary for his decent attendance on the public worship of God. Who ever saw him irreverently and indecently lolling, and laying down his head to sleep, or gazing about the meetinghouse in time of divine service? And as he was able (as was before observed) to discourse very understandingly of experimental religion, so to some persons with whom he was very intimate, he gave intimations sufficiently plain, while conversing of these things, that they were matters of his own experience. And some serious persons in civil authority, who have ordinarily differed from him in matters of government, yet on some occasional close conversation with him on things of religion, have manifested a high opinion of him as to real experimental piety.

As he was known to be a serious person, and an enemy to a profane or vain conversation, so he was feared on that account by great and small. When he was in the room, only his presence was sufficient to maintain decency; though many were there accounted great men, who otherwise were disposed to take a much greater freedom in their talk and behavior, than they dared to do in his presence. He was not unmindful of death, nor insensible of his own frailty, nor did death come unexpected to him. For some years past, he has spoken much to some persons of dying, and going into the eternal world, signifying that he did not expect to continue

long here.

Added to all these things, to render him eminently a *strong rod*, he was attended with many circumstances which tended to give him advantage for the exerting of his strength for the public good. He was honorably descended, was a man of considerable substance, had been long in authority, was extensively known and honored abroad, was high in the esteem of the many tribes of Indians in the neighborhood of the British colonies, and so had great influence upon them above any other man in New England. God had endowed him with a comely presence, and majesty of countenance, becoming the great qualities of his mind, and the place in which God had set him.

In the exercise of these qualities and endowments, under these advantages, he has been as it were a father to this part of the land, on whom the whole country had, under God, its dependence in all its public affairs, and especially since the beginning of the present war. How much the weight of all the warlike concerns of the country (which above any part of the land lies exposed to the enemy) has lain on his shoulders, and how he has been the spring of all motion, and the doer of everything that has been done, and how wisely and faithfully he has conducted these affairs, I need not inform this congregation. You well know that he took care of the country as a father of a family of children, not neglecting men's lives, and making light of their blood; but with great diligence, vigilance, and prudence, applying himself continually to the proper means of our safety and welfare. And especially has this, his native town, where he has dwelt from his infancy, reaped the benefit of his happy influence. His wisdom has been, under God, very much our guide, and his authority our support and strength, and he has been a great honor to Northampton, and ornament to our church. He continued in full capacity of usefulness while he lived. He was indeed considerably advanced in years, but his powers of mind were not sensibly abated, and his strength of body was not so impaired, but that he was able to go long journeys, in extreme heat and cold, and in a short time.

But now this "strong rod is broken and withered," and surely the judgment of God therein is very awful, and the dispensation that which may well be for a lamentation. Probably we shall be more sensible of the

worth and importance of such a strong rod by the want of it. The awful voice of God in this providence is worthy to be attended to by this whole province, and especially by the people of this county, but in a more peculiar manner by us of this town. We have now this testimony of the divine displeasure, added to all the other dark clouds God has lately brought over us, and his awful frowns upon us. It is a dispensation, on many accounts, greatly calling for our humiliation and fear before God; an awful manifestation of his supreme, universal, and absolute dominion, calling us to adore the divine sovereignty, and tremble at the presence of this great God. And it is a lively instance of human frailty and mortality. We see how that none are out of the reach of death, that no greatness, no authority, no wisdom and sagacity, no honorableness of person or station, no degree of valuableness and importance, exempts from the stroke of death. This is therefore a loud and solemn warning to all sorts to prepare for their departure hence.

And the memory of this person who is now gone, who was made so great a blessing while he lived, should engage us to show respect and kindness to his family. This we should do both out of respect to him and to his father, your former eminent pastor, who in his day was in a remarkable manner a father to this part of the land in spirituals, and especially to this town, as this his son has been in temporals. God greatly resented it, when the children of Israel did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal that had been made an instrument of so much good to them. Jdg. 8:35, “Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, according to all the good which he had showed unto Israel.”

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Justification by Faith Alone

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." -- **Romans 4:5**

Subject: We are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of goodness of our own.

The following things may be noted in this verse:

1. That justification respects a man as ungodly. This is evident by these words — *that justifieth the ungodly*, which cannot imply less than that God, in the act of justification, has no regard to anything in the person justified, as godliness or any goodness in him, but that immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly creature, so that godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it. When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is as absurd to suppose that our godliness, taken as some goodness in us, is the ground of our justification, as when it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind to suppose that sight was prior to, and the ground of, that act of mercy in Christ. Or as, if it should be said that such an one by his bounty has made a poor man rich, to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of this bounty towards him, and was the price by which it was procured.

2. It appears, that *by him that worketh not*, in this verse, is not meant one who merely does not conform to the ceremonial law, because *he that worketh not,* and *the ungodly*, are evidently synonymous expressions, or what signify the same, as appears by the manner of their connection. If not, to what purpose is the latter expression, *the ungodly*, brought in? The context gives no other occasion for it, but to show that by the grace of the gospel, God in justification has no regard to any godliness of ours. The foregoing verse is, “Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” In *that* verse, it is evident that gospel grace consists in the reward being given *without works*, and in *this* verse, which immediately follows it, and in sense is connected with it, gospel

grace consists in a man's being justified as *ungodly*. By which it is most plain, that by *him that worketh not*, and him that is *ungodly*, are meant the same thing, and that therefore not only works of the ceremonial law are excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness.

It is evident in the words, that by the faith here spoken of, by which we are justified, is not meant the same thing as a course of obedience or righteousness, since the expression by which this faith is here denoted, is *believing on him that justifies the ungodly*. — They that oppose the Solifidians, as they call them, greatly insist on it, that we should take the words of Scripture concerning this doctrine in their most natural and obvious meaning, and how do they cry out, of our clouding this doctrine with obscure metaphors, and unintelligible figures of speech? But is this to interpret Scripture according to its most obvious meaning, when the Scripture speaks of our *believing on him that justifies the ungodly*, or the *breakers of his law*, to say that the meaning of it is performing a course of obedience to his law, and avoiding the breaches of it? Believing on God as a *justifier*, certainly is a different thing from submitting to God as a *lawgiver*, especially believing on him as a justifier of *the ungodly*, or *rebels against the lawgiver*.

4. It is evident that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, *it is counted, or imputed to him for righteousness*. — The phrase, as the apostle uses it here and in the context, manifestly imports that God of his sovereign grace is pleased in his dealings with the sinner, so to regard one that has no righteousness, that the consequence shall be the same as if he had. This however may be from the respect it bears to something that is indeed righteous. It is plain that this is the force of the expression in the preceding verses. In the last verse but one, it is manifest, the apostle lays the stress of his argument for the free grace of God — from that text of the Old Testament about Abraham — on the word *counted* or *imputed*. This is the thing that he supposed God to show his grace in, *viz.* in his *counting* something for righteousness, in his consequential dealings with Abraham, that was no righteousness in itself. And in the next verse, which immediately precedes the text, "Now to him that worketh is the

reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," the word there translated *reckoned*, is the same that in the other verses is rendered *imputed* and *counted*, and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "As to *him that works,* there is no need of any gracious *reckoning* or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness. For if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs." This is further evident by the words that follow, Rom. 4:6, "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." What can here be meant by imputing righteousness without works, but imputing righteousness to him that has none of his own? Verse 7, 8, "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." How are these words of David to the apostle's purpose? Or how do they prove any such thing, as that righteousness is imputed without works, unless it be because the word *imputed* is used, and the subject of the imputation is mentioned as a sinner, and consequently destitute of a moral righteousness? For David says no such thing, as that he is forgiven without the works of the ceremonial law. There is no hint of the ceremonial law, or reference to it, in the words. I will therefore venture to infer this *doctrine* from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, *viz.*

That we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.

Such an assertion as this, I am sensible, many would be ready to call absurd, as betraying a great deal of ignorance, and containing much inconsistency, but I desire everyone's patience till I have done.

In handling this doctrine, I would:

I. Explain the *meaning* of it, and show how I would be understood by such an assertion.

II. Proceed to the consideration of the evidence of the *truth* of it.

III. Show how evangelical obedience is concerned in this affair.

IV. Answer objections.

V. Consider the importance of the doctrine.

I. I would explain the meaning of the doctrine, or show in what sense I assert it, and would endeavor to evince the truth of it, which may be done in answer to these two inquiries, *viz.* 1.What is meant by being justified? 2. What is meant when it is said, that this is "by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own?"

First, I would show what justification is, or what I suppose is meant in Scripture by being justified.

A person is to be *justified*, when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life. That we should take the word in such a sense, and understand it as the judge's accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him, and looking on him therefore as not only free from any obligation to punishment, but also as just and righteous and so entitled to a positive reward, is not only most agreeable to the etymology and natural import of the word, which signifies to pass one for righteous in judgment, but also manifestly agreeable to the force of the word as used in Scripture.

Some suppose that nothing more is intended in Scripture by justification, than barely the remission of sins. If so, it is very strange, if we consider the nature of the case. For it is most evident, and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule or law of God we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either justified or condemned. Now what is it to justify a person as the subject of a law or rule, but to judge him as standing right with respect to that rule? To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve of him as standing right, as subject to the law in that case, and to justify in general is to pass him in judgment, as standing right in a state correspondent to the law or rule in general. But certainly, in order to a person's being looked on as standing right with respect to the rule in

general, or in a state corresponding with the law of God, more is needful than not having the guilt of sin. For whatever that law is, whether a new or an old one, doubtless something positive is needed in order to its being answered. We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or of him that judges according to it, by a mere pardon of sin, than Adam, our first surety, was justified by the law, at the first point of his existence, before he had fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had so much as any trial whether he would fulfill it or no. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified, and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative. He would have been approved of, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and accordingly would have been adjudged to the reward of it. So Christ, our second surety (in whose justification all whose surety he is, are virtually justified), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments through all trials, and then in his resurrection he was justified. When he had been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. 3:18, then he that was manifest in the flesh was justified in the Spirit, 1 Tim. 3:16. But God, when he justified him in raising him from the dead, did not only release him from his humiliation for sin, and acquit him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation that was the reward of what he had done. And indeed the justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to communion in the justification of this head and surety of all believers: for as Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person, but as our surety. So when after this suffering he was raised from the dead, he was therein justified, not as a private person, but as the surety and representative of all that should believe in him. So that he was raised again not only for his own, but also for our justification, according to the apostle, Rom. 4:25, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." And therefore it is that the apostle says, as he does in Rom. 8:34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

But that a believer's justification implies not only remission of sins, or acquittal from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that

glory which is the reward of righteousness, is more directly taught in the Scriptures, particularly in Rom. 5:1, 2, where the apostle mentions both these as joint benefits implied in justification: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” So remission of sin, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, are mentioned together as what are jointly obtained by faith in Christ, Acts 26:18, “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me.” Both these are without doubt implied in that passing from death to life, which Christ speaks of as the fruit of faith, and which he opposes to condemnation, John 5:24, “Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

I proceed now,

Secondly, to show what is meant when it is said, that this justification is by faith only, and not by any virtue or goodness of our own.

This inquiry may be subdivided into two, *viz.*

1. How it is by *faith*. 2. How it is by faith *alone*, without any manner of goodness of ours.

1. How justification is by *faith*. — Here the great difficulty has been about the import and force of the particle *by*, or what is that influence that faith has in the affair of justification that is expressed in Scripture by being justified by faith.

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, though faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification, and that because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as used in divinity. In one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation. In

another sense, faith is the condition of justification, and in another sense, other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too. There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as are commonly used (which yet we are forced to use), such as condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification, the terms of the covenant, and the like, and I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word condition is very often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification. For by the word condition, as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used, we mean anything that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition, and as such is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds both in the affirmative and negative, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing. But in this sense faith is not the only condition of salvation and justification. For there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which, it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation, in multitudes of places. Such are love to God, and love to our brethren, forgiving men their trespasses, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, to be pursued or performed by us, in order to eternal life, which if they are done, or obtained, we shall have eternal life, and if not done, or not obtained, we shall surely perish. And if faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, I do not apprehend that to say faith was the condition of justification, would express the sense of that phrase of Scripture, of being justified by faith. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, necessarily, and inseparably attending justification: for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that effect has on its influence.

Some, aware of this, have supposed that the influence or dependence might well be expressed by faith's being the *instrument* of our justification, which has been misunderstood, and injuriously represented, and ridiculed by those that have denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as though they had supposed faith was used as an instrument in the hand of God, whereby he performed and brought to pass that act of his, *viz*. approving and justifying the believer. Whereas it was not intended that faith was the instrument wherewith God justifies, but the instrument wherewith we receive justification: not the instrument wherewith the justifier acts in justifying, but wherewith the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification. But yet, it must be owned, this is an obscure way of speaking, and there must certainly be some impropriety in calling it an instrument wherewith we receive or accept justification. For the very persons who thus explain the matter, speak of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself, and if so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is a difference between the act and the instrument. Besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ, the mediator, by whom and his righteousness by which we are justified, is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising therefrom more indirectly. Therefore, if faith be an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ, than the instrument by which we receive justification.

But I humbly conceive we have been ready to look too far to find out what that influence of faith in our justification is, or what is that dependence of this effect on faith, signified by the expression of being justified by faith, overlooking that which is most obviously pointed forth in the expression, *viz*. that (there being a mediator that has purchased justification) faith in this mediator is that which renders it a meet and suitable thing, in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him. There is this benefit purchased, which God sees it to be a more meet and suitable thing that it should be assigned to some rather than others, because he sees them differently qualified: that qualification wherein the meetness to this benefit, as the case stands, consists, is that in us by which we are justified. If Christ had not come into the world and died, etc. to purchase justification, no

qualification whatever in us could render it a meet or fit thing that we should be justified. But the case being as it now stands, *viz.* that Christ has actually purchased justification by his own blood for infinitely unworthy creatures, there may be certain qualifications found in some persons, which, either from the relation it bears to the mediator and his merits, or on some other account, is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a meet and condecent thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit, and of which if any are destitute, it renders it an unfit and unsuitable thing that they should have it. *The wisdom of God in his constitutions doubtless appears much in the fitness and beauty* of *them, so that those things are established to be done that are fit to be done, and that these things are connected in his constitution that are agreeable one to another.* — So God justifies a believer according to his revealed constitution, without doubt, because he sees something in this qualification that, as the case stands, renders it a fit thing that such should be justified: whether it be because faith is the instrument, or as it were the hand, by which he that has purchased justification is apprehended and accepted, or because it is the acceptance itself, or whatever else. To be justified, is to be approved of God as a proper subject of pardon, with a right to eternal life. Therefore, when it is said that we are justified by faith, what else can be understood by it, than that faith is that by which we are rendered approvable, fitly so, and indeed, as the case stands, proper subjects of this benefit?

This is something different from faith being the *condition* of justification, though inseparably connected with justification. So are many other things besides faith, and yet nothing in us but faith renders it meet that we should have justification assigned to us: as I shall presently show in answer to the next inquiry, *viz.*

2. How this is said to be by faith *alone*, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own. This may seem to some to be attended with two difficulties, *viz.* how this can be said to be by faith alone, without any virtue or goodness of ours, when faith itself is a virtue, and one part of our goodness, and is not only some manner of goodness of ours, but is a very excellent qualification, and one chief part of the inherent holiness of a Christian? And if it be a part of our inherent goodness or excellency

(whether it be this part or any other) that renders it a condecent or congruous thing that we should have this benefit of Christ assigned to us, what is this less than what they mean who talk of a merit of congruity? And moreover, if this part of our Christian holiness qualifies us, in the sight of God, for this benefit of Christ, and renders it a fit or meet thing, in his sight, that we should have it, why not other parts of holiness, and conformity to God, which are also very excellent, and have as much of the image of Christ in them, and are no less lovely in God's eyes, qualify us as much, and have as much influence to render us meet, in God's sight, for such a benefit as this? Therefore I answer,

When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our *own*, what is meant is that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours. It is not, in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified. Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions,

(1.) It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to him, that is expressed in Scripture, from time to time, by being *in Christ*, and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to him as members to the head, and branches to the stock, and is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is. Nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of disputes about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union*, as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it, than all, of all sorts, will readily allow, *viz.* that there is a peculiar *relation* between true Christians and Christ, which there is not between him and others, and which is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture, of being in Christ, being members of Christ, etc.

(2.) This *relation* or *union* to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be in

Christ (whatever it be), is the ground of their right to his benefits. This needs no proof: the reason of the thing, at first blush, demonstrates it. It is exceeding evident also by Scripture, 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 Cor. 1:30, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us — righteousness." First we must be *in him*, and then he will be made righteousness or justification to us. Eph. 1:6, "Who hath made us accepted in the beloved." Our being *in him* is the ground of our being accepted. So it is in those unions to which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this. The *union* of the members of the body with the head, is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head. It is the *union* of the branches to the stock, which is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock. It is the *relation* of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate: they are looked upon, in several respects, as one in law. So there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians, so that (as all except Socinians allow) one, in some respects, is accepted for the other by the supreme Judge.

(3.) And thus it is that faith is the qualification in any person that renders it meet in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ's satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him, *viz.* because it is that in him which, *on his part*, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has been just now observed, it is a person's being, according to scripture phrase, *in Christ,* that is the ground of having his satisfaction and merits belonging to him, and a right to the benefits procured thereby. The reason of it is plain: it is easy to see how our having Christ's merits and benefits belonging to us, follows from our having (if I may so speak) *Christ himself* belonging to us, or our being united to him. And if so, it must also be easy to see how, or in what manner, that in a person, which *on his part* makes up the *union* between his soul and Christ, should be the things on the account of which God looks on it as meet that he should have Christ's merits belonging to him. It is a very different thing for God to assign to a particular person a right to Christ's merits and benefits from regard to a qualification in him in this respect, from his doing it for him out of respect to the *value* or loveliness of that qualification, or as a reward of its excellency.

As there is nobody but what will allow that there is a peculiar *relation* between Christ and his true disciples, by which they are in some sense in Scripture said to be *one*. So I suppose there is nobody but what will allow, that there may be something that the true Christian does *on his part,* whereby he is *active* in coming into this relation or union: some *uniting* act, or that which is done towards this union or relation (or whatever any please to call it) *on the Christian's part*. Now faith I suppose to be this act.

I do not now pretend to define justifying faith, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine thus much concerning it, *viz*. That it is that by which the soul, which before was separate and alienated from Christ, unites itself to him, or ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation, and comes into that forementioned union or relation to him, or, to use the scripture phrase, it is that by which the soul comes to Christ, and *receives* him. This is evident by the Scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith. John 6:35-39, "He that *cometh* to me, shall never hunger; and he that *believeth* on me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me, shall *come to* me; and him that *cometh* to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Verse 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and *believeth* on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up the last day." — John 5:38-40, "Whom he hath sent, him ye *believe* not. Search the Scriptures, for — they are they which testify of me. And ye will not *come unto me*, that ye might have life." Verse 43, 44, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye *receive* me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will *receive*. How can ye *believe,* which receive honor one of another?" — John 1:12, "But as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." If it be said that these are obscure figures of speech, which however they might be well understood of old among those who commonly used such metaphors, are with difficulty understood now. I allow, that the expressions of *receiving* Christ and *coming* to Christ, are metaphorical expressions. If I should allow them to be obscure metaphors, yet this much at least is certainly plain in them, *viz*. that faith is that by which

those who before were separated, and at a distance from Christ (that is to say, were not so related and united to him as his people are), cease to be any longer at such a distance, and come into that relation and nearness, unless they are so unintelligible, that nothing at all can be understood by them.

God does not give those that believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a *reward* for faith, but only because faith is the soul's *active* uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of unition, *on their part*. God sees it fit, that in order to a union being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order to an union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice, and hence sees it fit that they only who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one *in law*. What is *real* in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is *legal:* that is, it is something really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the judge. And if there be any *act* or qualification in believers of that uniting nature, that it is meet on that account the judge should look upon them and accept them as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if these were their own satisfaction and merits. This necessarily follows, or rather is implied.

And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured thereby, *viz.* as it thus makes Christ and the believer *one* in the acceptance of the supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The apostle John in these words, 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ, of which he gives an account in his gospel, chap. 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And where the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to

Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with Christ, as the ground of an interest in his benefits. To as many as received him, "to them gave he power" to become the sons of God. Ye will not come unto me, "that ye might have life." And there is a wide difference between its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs who believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is a fit *reward* of faith — or a suitable testimony of God's respect to the amiableness and excellency of that grace — and its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs, because Christ and they are so united, that in the eyes of the Judge they may be looked upon and taken as one.

Although, on account of faith in the believer, it is in the sight of God fit and congruous, both that he who believes should be looked upon as in Christ, and also as having an interest in his merits, in the way that has been now explained. Yet it appears that this is very wide from a *merit of congruity,* or indeed any *moral* congruity at all to either. There is a twofold fitness to a state. I know not how to give them distinguishing names, otherwise than by calling the one a *moral*, and the other a *natural* fitness. A person has a moral fitness for a state, when his moral excellency commends him to it, or when his being put into such a good state is but a suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency, or value, or amiableness of any of his qualifications or acts. A person has a natural fitness for a state, when it appears meet and condecent that he should be in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness there is between such qualifications and such circumstances: not because the qualifications are lovely or unlovely, but only because the qualifications and the circumstances are like one another, or do in their nature suit and agree or unite one to another. And it is on this latter account only that God looks on it fit by a natural fitness, that he whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Savior, should be looked upon as united to that Savior, and so having an interest in him, and not from any moral fitness there is between the excellency of such a qualification as faith, and such a glorious blessedness as the having an interest in Christ. God's bestowing Christ and his benefits on a soul in consequence of faith, out of regard only to the natural concord there is between such a qualification of a soul, and such a union with Christ, and

interest in him, makes the case very widely different from what it would be, if he bestowed this from regard to any moral suitableness. For, in the former case, it is only from God's love of order that he bestows these things on the account of faith: in the latter, God does it out of love to the grace of faith itself. — God will neither look on Christ's merits as ours, nor adjudge his benefits to us, till we be in Christ. Nor will he look upon us as being in him, without an active unition of our hearts and souls to him, because he is a wise being, and delights in order and not in confusion, and that things should be together or asunder according to their nature. His making such a constitution is a testimony of his love of order. Whereas if it were out of regard to any moral fitness or suitableness between faith and such blessedness, it would be a testimony of his love to the act or qualification itself. The one supposes this divine constitution to be a manifestation of God's regard to the beauty of the act of faith. The other only supposes it to be a manifestation of his regard to the beauty of that order that there is in uniting those things that have a natural agreement and congruity, and unition of the one with the other. Indeed a moral suitableness or fitness to a state includes a natural. For, if there be a moral suitableness that a person should be in such a state, there is also a natural suitableness, but such a natural suitableness, as I have described, by no means necessarily includes a moral.

This is plainly what our divines intend when they say, that faith does not justify as a *work*, or a righteousness, *viz.* that it does not justify as a part of our moral goodness or excellency, or that it does not justify as man was to have been justified by the covenant of works, which was, to have a title to eternal life given him of God, in testimony of his pleasedness with his works, or his regard to the inherent excellency and beauty of his obedience. And this is certainly what the apostle Paul means, when he so much insists upon it, that we are not justified by works, *viz.* that we are not justified by them as good works, or by any goodness, value, or excellency of our works. For the proof of this I shall at present mention but one thing, and that is, the apostle from time to time speaking of our not being justified by works, as the thing that excludes all boasting, Eph. 2:9, Rom. 3:27, and chap. 4:2. Now which way do works give occasion for boasting, but as good? What do men use to boast of, but of something they suppose good or excellent? And on what account do they boast of

anything, but for the supposed excellency that is in it?

From these things we may learn in what manner faith is the only condition of justification and salvation. For though it be not the only condition, so as alone truly to have the place of a condition in a hypothetical proposition, in which justification and salvation are the consequent. Yet it is the condition of justification in a manner peculiar to it, and so that nothing else has a parallel influence with it, because faith includes the whole act of unition to Christ as a Savior. The entire active uniting of the soul, or the whole of what is called coming to Christ, and receiving of him, is called faith in Scripture. However other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet it is not the nature of any other graces or virtues directly to close with Christ as a mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and do belong to its nature.

Thus I have explained my meaning, in asserting it as a doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by *faith only,* without any manner of goodness of our own.

I now proceed,

II. To the proof of it, which I shall endeavor to produce in the following arguments.

First, such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualifications, or act or course of acts, does or can render it suitable that a person should have an interest in the Savior, and so a title to his benefits, on account of an excellency therein, or any other way, than as something in him may unite him to the Savior. It is not suitable that God should give fallen man an interest in Christ and his merits, as a testimony of his respect to anything whatsoever as a loveliness in him, and that because it is not meet, till a sinner is actually justified, than anything in him should be accepted of God, as any excellency or amiableness of his person. Or that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree testify any pleasedness with him, or favor towards him, on the account of anything inherent in him, and that for two reasons:

1. The nature of things will not admit of it. And this appears from the infinite guilt that the sinner till justified is under, which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin. But because this is what some deny, I would therefore first establish that point, and show that sin is a thing that is indeed properly of infinite heinousness, and then show the consequence that it cannot be suitable, till the sinner is actually justified, that God should by any act testify pleasedness with or acceptance of any excellency or amiableness of his person.

That the evil and demerit of sin is infinitely great, is most demonstrably evident, because what the evil or iniquity of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, or doing what we should not do. Therefore by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, by so much the greater is the iniquity of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love or honor any being is great in proportion to the greatness or excellency of that being, or his worthiness to be loved and honored. We are under greater obligations to love a more lovely being than a less lovely. If a being be infinitely excellent and lovely, our obligations to love him are therein infinitely great. The matter is so plain, it seems needless to say much about it.

Some have argued exceeding strangely against the infinite evil of sin, from its being committed against an infinite object, that then it may as well be argued, that there is also an infinite value or worthiness in holiness and love to God, because that also has an infinite object. Whereas the argument, from parity of reason, will carry it in the reverse. The sin of the creature against God is ill-deserving in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature. The greatness of the object, and the meanness of the subject, aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of the respect of the creature of God. It is worthless (and not worthy) in proportion to the meanness of the subject. So much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The unworthiness of sin or opposition to God rises and is great in proportion to the dignity of the object and inferiority of the subject. But on the contrary, the value of respect rises in proportion to the value of the subject, and that for this plain reason, *viz.* that the evil of disrespect is in

proportion to the obligation that lies upon the subject to the object, which obligation is most evidently increased by the excellency and superiority of the object. But on the contrary, the worthiness of respect to a being is in proportion to the obligation that lies on him who is the object (or rather the reason he has), to regard the subject, which certainly is in proportion to the subject's value or excellency. Sin or disrespect is evil or heinous in proportion to the degree of what it denies in the object, and as it were takes from it, *viz.* its excellency and worthiness of respect. On the contrary, respect is valuable in proportion to the value of what is given to the object in that respect, which undoubtedly (other things being equal) is great in proportion to the subject's value, or worthiness of regard, because the subject in giving his respect, can give no more than himself. So far as he gives his respect, he gives himself to the object, and therefore his gift is of greater or lesser value in proportion to the value of himself.

Hence (by the way) the love, honor, and obedience of Christ towards God, has infinite value, from the excellency and dignity of the person in whom these qualifications were inherent. The reason why we needed a person of infinite dignity to obey for us, was because of our infinite comparative meanness, who had disobeyed, whereby our disobedience was infinitely aggravated. We needed one, the worthiness of whose obedience might be answerable to the unworthiness of our disobedience, and therefore needed one who was as great and worthy as we were unworthy.

Another objection (that perhaps may be thought hardly worth mentioning) is, that to suppose sin to be infinitely heinous, is to make all sins equally heinous: for how can any sin be more than infinitely heinous? But all that can be argued hence is, that no sin can be greater with respect to that aggravation, the worthiness of the object against whom it is committed. One sin cannot be more aggravated than another in *that* respect, because the aggravation of every sin is infinite, but that does not hinder that some sins may be more heinous than others in *other* respects: as if we should suppose a cylinder infinitely long, cannot be greater in that respect, *viz.* with respect to the length of it. But yet it may be doubled and trebled, and make a thousand-fold more, by the increase of other dimensions. Of sins that are all infinitely heinous, some may be more heinous than others, as well as of divers punishments that are all

infinitely dreadful calamities, or all of them infinitely exceeding all finite calamities, so that there is no finite calamity, however great, but what is infinitely less dreadful, or more eligible than any of them. Yet some of them may be a thousand times more dreadful than others. A punishment may be infinitely dreadful by reason of the infinite duration of it, and therefore cannot be greater with respect to *that* aggravation of it, *viz.* its length of continuance, but yet may be vastly more terrible on other accounts.

Having thus, as I imagine, made it clear that all sin is infinitely heinous, and consequently that the sinner, before he is justified, is under infinite guilt in God's sight, it now remains that I show the consequence, or how it follows from hence, that it is not suitable that God should give the sinner an interest in Christ's merits, and so a title to his benefits, from regard to any qualification, or act, or course of acts in him, on the account of any excellency or goodness whatsoever therein, but only as uniting to Christ; or (which fully implies it) that it is not suitable that God, by any act, should, in any manner or degree, testify any acceptance of, or pleasedness with anything, as any virtue, or excellency, or any part of loveliness, or valuableness in his person, until he is actually already interested in Christ's merits. From the premises it follows, that before the sinner is already interested in Christ, and justified, it is impossible God should have any acceptance of, or pleasedness with the person of the sinner, as in any degree lovely in his sight, or indeed less the object of his displeasure and wrath. For, by the supposition, the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in the sight of God, for guilt is not removed but by pardon. But to suppose the sinner already pardoned, is to suppose him already justified, which is contrary to the supposition. But if the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in God's sight, that is the same thing as still to be beheld of God as infinitely the object of his displeasure and wrath, or infinitely hateful in his eyes. If so, where is any room for anything in him, to be accepted as some valuableness or acceptability of him in God's sight, or for any act of favor of any kind towards him, or any gift whatsoever to him, in testimony of God's respect to and acceptance of something of him lovely and pleasing? If we should suppose that a sinner could have faith, or some other grace in his heart, and yet remain separate from Christ, and that he is not looked upon as being in Christ, or

having any relation to him, it would not be meet that such true grace should be accepted of God as any loveliness of his person in the sight of God. If it should be accepted as the loveliness of the person, that would be to accept the person as in some degree lovely to God. But this cannot be consistent with his still remaining under infinite guilt, or infinite unworthiness in God's sight, which that goodness has no worthiness to balance. — While God beholds the man as separate from Christ, he must behold him as he is in himself, and so his goodness cannot be beheld by God, but as taken with his guilt and hatefulness, and as put in the scales with it. So his goodness is nothing, because there is a finite on the balance against an infinite whose proportion to it is nothing. In such a case, if the man be looked on as he is in himself, the excess of the weight in one scale above another, must be looked upon as the quality of the man. These contraries being beheld together, one takes from another, as one number is subtracted from another, and the man must be looked upon in God's sight according to the remainder. For here, by the supposition, all acts of grace or favor, in not imputing the guilt as it is, are excluded, because that supposes a degree of pardon, and that supposes justification, which is contrary to what is supposed, *viz.* that the sinner is not already justified. Therefore things must be taken strictly as they are, and so the man is still infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight, as he was before, without diminution, because his goodness bears no proportion to his unworthiness, and therefore when taken together is nothing.

Hence may be more clearly seen the force of that expression in the text, of believing on him that *justifieth the ungodly*. For though there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good, prior to justification, yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellency of the person, till after justification. Goodness or loveliness of the person in the acceptance of God, in any degree, is not to be considered as prior but posterior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair. Though a respect to the natural suitableness between such a qualification, and such a state, does go before justification, yet the acceptance even of faith as any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification. The goodness is on the forementioned account justly looked upon as nothing, until the man is justified: And therefore the man is respected in justification, as in himself altogether hateful. Thus the nature of things

will not admit of a man having an interest given him in the merits or benefits of a Savior, on the account of anything as a righteousness, or a virtue, or excellency in him.

2. A divine constitution antecedent to that which establishes justification by a Savior (and indeed to any need of a Savior), stands in the way of it, *viz*. that original constitution or law which man was put under, by which constitution or law the sinner is condemned, because he is a violator of that law, and stands condemned, till he has actually an interest in the Savior, through whom he is set at liberty from that condemnation. But to suppose that God gives a man an interest in Christ in *reward* for his righteousness or virtue, is inconsistent with his still remaining under condemnation till he has an interest in Christ, because it supposes, that the sinner's virtue is accepted, and he accepted for it, before he has an interest in Christ, inasmuch as an interest in Christ is given as a reward of his virtue. But the virtue must first be accepted, before it is rewarded, and the man must first be accepted for his virtue before he is rewarded for it with so great and glorious a reward. For the very notion of a reward, is some good bestowed in testimony of respect to and acceptance of virtue in the person rewarded. It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept of anything from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed. And then, such acceptance is inconsistent with, and contradictory to such remaining condemnation, for the law condemns him that violates it, to be totally rejected and cast off by God. But how can a man continue under this condemnation, *i. e*. continue utterly rejected and cast off by God, and yet his righteousness or virtue be accepted, and he himself accepted on the account of it, so as to have so glorious a reward as an interest in Christ bestowed as a testimony of that acceptance?

I know that the answer will be that we now are not subject to that constitution which mankind were at first put under, but that God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, and put us under a new law, and introduced a more mild constitution, and that the constitution or law itself not remaining, there is no need of supposing that the condemnation of it remains, to stand in the way of the

acceptance of our virtue. And indeed there is no other way of avoiding this difficulty. The condemnation of the law must stand in force against a man, till he is actually interested in the Savior who has satisfied and answered the law, so as effectually to prevent any acceptance of his virtue, either before, or in order to such an interest, unless the law or constitution itself be abolished. But the scheme of those modern divines by whom this is maintained, seems to contain a great deal of absurdity and self-contradiction. They hold that the old law given to Adam, which requires perfect obedience, is entirely repealed, and that instead of it we are put under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall, whereby we are unable to perform that perfect obedience that was required by the first law. For they strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God to require anything of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform, and yet they hold, that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our obedience, that so our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect. Now, how can these things hang together? I would ask what law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law, then they are not sins, and if they be not sins, what need of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and so the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law, for that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections. They cannot be a breach of the old law, for that they say is entirely abolished, and we never were under it, and we cannot break a law that we never were under. They say it would not be just in God to exact of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just in God to require more of us than we can perform in our present state, and to punish us for failing of it. Therefore by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need therefore of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? What need of Christ's suffering to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need of Christ's dying to purchase that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, when according to their scheme it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than imperfect should be required? What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would in itself be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to

persuade God not to do unjustly? If it be said that Christ died to satisfy that law for us, that so we might not be under that law, but might be delivered from it, that so there might be room for us to be under a more mild law, still I would inquire, What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that (according to their scheme) it would in itself be unjust that we should be under, because in our present state we are not able to keep it? What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that it would be unjust that we should be under, whether Christ died or no?

Thus far I have argued principally from reason, and the nature of things: — I proceed now to the

Second argument, which is that this is a doctrine which the Holy Scriptures, the revelation that God has given us of his mind and will — by which alone we can never come to know how those who have offended God can come to be accepted of him, and justified in his sight — is exceeding full. The apostle Paul is abundant in teaching, that "we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law." (Rom. 3:28; 4:5; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8; 3:11; 3:24) There is no one doctrine that he insists so much upon, and that he handles with so much distinctness, explaining, giving reasons and answering objections.

Here it is not denied by any, that the apostle does assert that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law, because the words are express. But only it is said that we take his words wrong, and understand that by them that never entered into his heart, in that when he excludes the works of the law, we understand him of the whole law of God, or the rule which he has given to mankind to walk by: whereas all that he intends is the ceremonial law.

Some that oppose this doctrine indeed say that the apostle sometimes means that it is by faith, *i.e.* a hearty embracing the gospel in its first act only, or without any preceding holy life, that persons are admitted into a justified state. But say they, it is by a persevering obedience that they are continued in a justified state, and it is by this that they are finally justified. But this is the same thing as to say, that a man on his first embracing the gospel is conditionally justified and pardoned. To pardon

sin is to free the sinner from the punishment of it, or from that eternal misery that is due it. Therefore if a person is pardoned, or freed from this misery, on his first embracing the gospel, and yet not finally freed, but his actual freedom still depends on some condition yet to be performed, it is inconceivable how he can be pardoned otherwise than conditionally: that is, he is not properly actually pardoned, and freed from punishment, but only he has God's promise that he shall be pardoned on future conditions. God promises him, that now, if he perseveres in obedience, he shall be finally pardoned or actually freed from hell, which is to make just nothing at all of the apostle's great doctrine of justification by faith alone. Such a conditional pardon is no pardon or justification at all any more than all mankind have, whether they embrace the gospel or no. For they all have a promise of final justification on conditions of future sincere obedience, as much as he that embraces the gospel. But not to dispute about this, we will suppose that there may be something or other at the sinner's first embracing the gospel, that may properly be called justification or pardon, and yet that final justification, or real freedom from the punishment of sin, is still suspended on conditions hitherto unfulfilled. Yet they who hold that sinners are thus justified on embracing the gospel, suppose that they are justified by this, no otherwise than as it is a leading act of obedience, or at least as virtue and moral goodness in them, and therefore would be excluded by the apostle as much as any other virtue or obedience, if it be allowed that he means the moral law, when he excludes works of the law. And therefore, if that point be yielded, that the apostle means the moral, and not only the ceremonial, law, their whole scheme falls to the ground.

And because the issue of the whole argument from those texts in St. Paul's epistles depends on the determination of this point, I would be particular in the discussion of it.

Some of our opponents in this doctrine of justification, when they deny that by the law the apostle means the moral law or the whole rule of life which God has given to mankind, seem to choose to express themselves thus: that the apostle only intends the Mosaic dispensation. But this comes to just the same thing as if they said that the apostle only means to exclude the works of the ceremonial law. For when they say that it is

intended only that we are not justified by the works of the Mosaic dispensation, if they mean anything by it, it must be, that we are not justified by attending and observing what is Mosaic in that dispensation, or by what was peculiar to it, and wherein it differed from the Christian dispensation, which is the same as that which is ceremonial and positive, and not moral, in that administration. So that this is what I have to disprove, *viz*. that the apostle, when he speaks of works of the law in this affair, means only works of the ceremonial law, or those observances that were peculiar to the Mosaic administration.

And here it must be noted, that nobody controverts it with them, whether the works of the ceremonial law be not included, or whether the apostle does not particularly argue against justification by circumcision, and other ceremonial observances. But all in question is whether when he denies justification by works of the law, he is to be understood only of the ceremonial law, or whether the moral law be not also implied and intended. And therefore those arguments which are brought to prove that the apostle meant the ceremonial law, are nothing to the purpose, unless they prove that the apostle meant those *only*.

What is much insisted on is that it was the judaizing Christians being so fond of circumcision and other ceremonies of the law, and depending so much on them, which was the very occasion of the apostle's writing as he does against justification by the works of the law. But supposing it were so, that their trusting in works of the ceremonial law were the sole *occasion* of the apostle's writing (which yet there is no reason to allow, as may appear afterwards), if their trusting in a particular work, as a work of righteousness, was all that gave occasion to the apostle to write, how does it follow, that therefore the apostle did not upon that occasion write against trusting in *all works* of righteousness whatsoever? Where is the absurdity of supposing that the apostle might take occasion, from his observing some to trust in a certain work as trusting in any works of righteousness at all, and that it was a very proper occasion too? Yea, it would have been unavoidable for the apostle to have argued against trusting in a particular work, in the quality of a work of righteousness, which quality was general, but he must therein argue against trusting in works of righteousness in general. Supposing it had been some other

particular sort of works that was the occasion of the apostle's writing, as for instance, works of charity, and the apostle should hence take occasion to write to them not to trust in their works, could the apostle by that be understood of no other works besides works of charity? Would it have been absurd to understand him as writing against trusting in any work at all, because it was their trusting to a particular work that gave occasion to his writing?

Another thing alleged, as an evidence that the apostle means the ceremonial law — when he says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law — is that he uses this argument to prove it, *viz.* that the law he speaks of was given so long after the covenant with Abraham, in Gal. 3:17, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But, say they, it was only the Mosaic administration, and not the covenant of works, that was given so long after. But the apostle's argument seems manifestly to be mistaken by them. The apostle does not speak of a law that began to exist four hundred and thirty years after. If he did, there would be some force in their objection, but he has respect to a certain solemn transaction, well known among the Jews by the phrase "the giving of the law," which was at Mount Sinai (Exo. 19, 20) consisting especially in God's giving the ten commandments (which is the moral law) with a terrible voice, which law he afterwards gave in tables of stone. This transaction the Jews in the apostle's time misinterpreted. They looked upon it as God's establishing that law as a rule of justification. Against this conceit of theirs the apostle brings this invincible argument, *viz.* that God would never go about to disannul his covenant with Abraham, which was plainly a covenant of grace, by a transaction with his posterity, that was so long after it, and was plainly built upon it. He would not overthrow a covenant of grace that he had long before established with Abraham, for him and his seed (which is often mentioned as the ground of God's making them his people), by now establishing a covenant of works with them at Mount Sinai, as the Jews and judaizing Christians supposed.

But that the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he excludes works of the law in justification, but also of the moral

law, and all works of obedience, virtue, and righteousness whatsoever, may appear by the following things.

1. The apostle does not only say that we are not justified by the works of the law, but that we are not justified by *works*, using a general term, as in our text, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth," etc.; and in the 6th verse, "God imputeth righteousness without works;" and Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So, Eph. 2:8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, — not of works;" by which, there is no reason in the world to understand the apostle of any other than works in general, as correlates of a reward, or good works, or works of virtue and righteousness. When the apostle says, we are justified or saved not by works, without any such term annexed, as the law, or any other addition to limit the expression, what warrant have any to confine it to works of a particular law or institution, excluding others? Are not observances of other divine laws works, as well as of that? It seems to be allowed by the divines in the Arminian scheme, in their interpretation of several of those texts where the apostle only mentions works, without any addition, that he means our own good works in general. But then, they say, he only means to exclude any proper merit in those works. But to say the apostle means one thing when he says, we are not justified by works, and another when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, when we find the expressions mixed and used in the same discourse, and when the apostle is evidently upon the same argument, is very unreasonable. It is to dodge and fly from Scripture, rather than open and yield ourselves to its teachings.

2. In the third chapter of Romans, our having been guilty of breaches of the moral law, is an argument that the apostle uses, why we cannot be justified by the works of the Old Testament, that all are under sin: "There is none righteous, no not one: their throat is as an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and their feet swift to shed blood." And so he goes on, mentioning only those things that are breaches of the moral law. And then when he has done, his conclusion is, in the 19th and 20th verses,

“Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” This is most evidently his argument, because all had sinned (as it was said in the 9th verse), and been guilty of those breaches of the moral law that he had mentioned (and it is repeated over again, verse 23), “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” therefore none at all can be justified by the deeds of the law. Now if the apostle meant only, that we are not justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law, what kind of arguing would that be, “Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood?” therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the Mosaic administration. They are guilty of the breaches of the moral law, and therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the ceremonial law! Doubtless, the apostle’s argument is that the very same law they have broken, can never justify them as observers of it, because every law necessarily condemns it violators. And therefore our breaches of the moral law argue no more, than that we cannot be justified by that law we have broken.

And it may be noted, that the apostle’s argument here is the same that I have already used, *viz*. that as we are in ourselves, and out of Christ, we are under the condemnation of that original law or constitution that God established with mankind. And therefore it is no way fit that anything we do, any virtue or obedience of ours, should be accepted, or we accepted on the account of it.

3. The apostle, in all the preceding part of this epistle, wherever he has the phrase, *the law*, evidently intends the moral law principally. As in the 12th verse of the foregoing chapter: “For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.” It is evidently the written moral law the apostle means, by the next verse but one, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law;” that is, the moral law that the Gentiles have by nature. And so the next verse, “Which show the work of the law written in their hearts.” It is the moral law, and not the ceremonial, that is written in the hearts of those who are destitute of divine revelation. And so in the 18th verse, “Thou approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the

law." It is the moral law that shows us the nature of things, and teaches us what is excellent, 20th verse, "Thou hast a form of knowledge and truth in the law." It is the moral law, as is evident by what follows, verse 22, 23, "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" Adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, surely are the breaking of the moral, and not the ceremonial law. So in the 27th verse, "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" *i.e.* the Gentiles, that you despise because uncircumcised, if they live moral and holy lives, in obedience to the moral law, shall condemn you though circumcised. And so there is not one place in all the preceding part of the epistle, where the apostle speaks of the law, but that he most apparently intends principally the moral law. And yet when the apostle, in continuance of the same discourse, comes to tell us, that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, then they will needs have it, that he means only the ceremonial law. Yea, though all this discourse about the moral law, showing how the Jews as well as Gentiles have violated it, is evidently preparatory and introductory to that doctrine, Rom. 3:20, "That no flesh," that is, none of mankind, neither Jews nor Gentiles, "can be justified by the works of the law."

4. It is evident that when the apostle says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law, he means the moral as well as ceremonial law, by his giving this reason for it, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," as Rom. 3:20, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now that law by which we come to the knowledge of sin, is the moral law chiefly and primarily. If this argument of the apostle be good, "that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, because it is by the law that we come to the knowledge of sin;" then it proves that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law, nor by the precepts of Christianity; for by them is the knowledge of sin. If the reason be good, then where the reason holds, the truth holds. It is a miserable shift, and a violent force put upon the words, to say that the meaning is, that by the law of circumcision is the knowledge of sin, because circumcision signifying the taking away of sin, puts men in mind

of sin. The plain meaning of the apostle is that as the law most strictly forbids sin, it tends to convince us of sin, and bring our own consciences to condemn us, instead of justifying of us: that the use of it is to declare to us our own guilt and unworthiness, which is the reverse of justifying and approving of us as virtuous or worthy. This is the apostle's meaning, if we will allow him to be his own expositor. For he himself, in this very epistle, explains to us how it is that by the law we have the knowledge of sin, and that it is by the law's forbidding sin, Rom. 7:7, "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." There the apostle determines two things: first, that the way in which "by the law is the knowledge of sin," is by the law's forbidding sin, and secondly, which is more directly still to the purpose, he determines that it is the moral law by which we come to the knowledge of sin. "For," says he, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Now it is the moral, and not the ceremonial law, that says, "Thou shalt not covet." Therefore, when the apostle argues that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified, because by the law is the knowledge of sin, his argument proves (unless he was mistaken as to the force of his argument), that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law.

5. It is evident that the apostle does not mean only the ceremonial law, because he gives this reason why we have righteousness, and a title to the privilege of God's children, not by the law, but by faith, "that the law worketh wrath." Rom. 4:13-16, "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Now the way in which the law works wrath, by the apostle's own account, in the reason he himself annexes, is by forbidding sin, and aggravating the guilt of the transgression. "For," says he, "where no law is, there is no transgression:" And so, Rom. 7:13, "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." If, therefore, this reason of the apostle be good, it is much stronger against justification by the moral law than the ceremonial law. For it is by transgressions of the moral law chiefly that there comes wrath: for they

are most strictly forbidden, and most terribly threatened.

6. It is evident that when the apostle says, we are not justified by the works of the law, that he excludes all our own virtue, goodness, or excellency, by that reason he gives for it, *viz.* "That boasting might be excluded." Rom. 3:26, 27, 28, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Eph. 2:8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Now what are men wont to boast of, but what they esteem their own goodness or excellency? If we are not justified by works of the ceremonial law, yet how does that exclude boasting, as long as we are justified by our own excellency, or virtue and goodness of our own, or works of righteousness which we have done?

But it is said, that boasting is excluded, as circumcision was excluded, which was what the Jews especially used to glory in, and value themselves upon, above other nations.

To this I answer, that the Jews were not only used to boast of circumcision, but were notorious for boasting of their moral righteousness. The Jews of those days were generally admirers and followers of the Pharisees, who were full of their boasts of their moral righteousness; as we may see by the example of the Pharisee mentioned in the 18th of Luke, which Christ mentions as describing the general temper of that sect: "Lord," says he, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men, an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer." The works that he boasts of were chiefly moral works: he depended on the works of the law for justification. And therefore Christ tells us, that the publican, that renounced all his own righteousness, "went down to his house justified rather than he." And elsewhere, we read of the Pharisees praying in the corners of the streets, and sounding a trumpet before them when they did alms. But those works which they so vainly boasted of were *moral* works. And not only so, but what the apostle in this very epistle condemns the Jews for, is their boasting of the moral law. Rom. 2:22, 23, "Thou that

sayest a man should not commit adultery, do thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" The law here mentioned that they made their boast of, was that of which adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, were the breaches, which is the moral law. So that this is the boasting which the apostle condemns them for. And therefore, if they were justified by the works of this law, then how comes he to say that their boasting is excluded? And besides, when they boasted of the rites of the ceremonial law, it was under a notion of its being a part of their own goodness or excellency, or what made them holier and more lovely in the sight of God than other people. If they were not justified by this part of their own supposed goodness or holiness, yet if they were by another, how did that exclude boasting? How was their boasting excluded, unless all goodness or excellency of their own was excluded

7. The reason given by the apostle why we can be justified only by faith, and not by the works of the law, in the 3d chapter of Galations *viz*. "That they that are under the law, are under the curse," makes it evident that he does not mean only the ceremonial law. In that chapter the apostle had particularly insisted upon it, that Abraham was justified by faith, and that it is by faith only, and not by the works of the law, that we can be justified, and become the children of Abraham, and be made partakers of the blessing of Abraham: and he gives this reason for it in the 10th verse: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is manifest that these words, cited from Deuteronomy, are spoken not only with regard to the ceremonial law, but the whole law of God to mankind and chiefly the moral law, and that all mankind are therefore as they are in themselves under the curse, not only while the ceremonial law lasted, but now since that has ceased. And therefore all who are justified, are redeemed from that curse, by Christ's bearing it for them; as in verse 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now therefore, either its being said that he is cursed who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, is a good reason why

we cannot be justified by the works of that law of which it is so said, or it is not: if it be, then it is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of the moral law, and of the whole rule which God has given to mankind to walk by. For the words are spoken of the moral as well as the ceremonial law, and reach every command or precept which God has given to mankind, and chiefly the moral precepts, which are most strictly enjoined, and the violations of which in both the New Testament and the Old, and in the books of Moses themselves, are threatened with the most dreadful curse.

8. The apostle in like manner argues against our being justified by our own righteousness, as he does against being justified by the works of the law; and evidently uses the expressions, of our *own righteousness*, and *works of the law*, promiscuously, and as signifying the same thing. It is particularly evident by Rom. 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Here it is plain that the same thing is asserted as in the two last verses but one of the foregoing chapter, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." And it is very unreasonable, upon several accounts, to suppose that the apostle, by their own righteousness, intends only their ceremonial righteousness. For when the apostle warns us against trusting in our own righteousness of justification, doubtless it is fair to interpret the expression in an agreement with other scriptures. Here we are warned, not to think that it is for the sake of our own righteousness that we obtain God's favor and blessing: as particularly in Deu. 9:4-6, "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which he sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness;

for thou art a stiff-necked people." None will pretend that here the expression *thy righteousness*, signifies only a ceremonial righteousness, but all virtue or goodness of their own — yea, and the inward goodness of the heart, as well as the outward goodness of life; which appears by the beginning of the 5th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart;" and also by the antithesis in the 6th verse, "Not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Their stiff-neckedness was their moral wickedness, obstinacy, and perverseness of heart. By righteousness, therefore, on the contrary, is meant their moral virtue, and rectitude of heart and life. This is what I would argue from hence, that the expression of *our own righteousness*, when used in Scripture with relation to the favor of God — and when we are warned against looking upon it as that by which that favor, or the fruits of it, are obtained — does not signify only a ceremonial righteousness, but all manner of goodness of our own.

The Jews also, in the New Testament, are condemned for trusting in their own righteousness in this sense, Luke 18:9, etc. "And he spake this parable unto certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous." This intends chiefly a moral righteousness, as appears by the parable itself, in which we have an account of the prayer of the Pharisee, wherein the things that he mentions as what he trusts in, are chiefly moral qualifications and performances, *viz.* that he was not an extortioner, unjust, nor an adulterer, etc.

But we need not go to the writings of other penmen of the Scripture. If we will allow the apostle Paul to be his own interpreter, he — when he speaks of our own righteousness as that by which we are not justified or saved — does not mean only a ceremonial righteousness, nor does he only intend a way of religion and serving God, of our own choosing, without divine warrant or prescription. But by our own righteousness he means the same as a righteousness of our own doing, whether it be a service or righteousness of God's prescribing, or our own unwarranted performing. Let it be an obedience to the ceremonial law, or a gospel obedience, or what it will: if it be a righteousness of our own doing, it is excluded by the apostle in this affair, as is evident by Tit. 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done." — But I would more particularly

insist on this text; and therefore this may be the

9th argument: that the apostle, when he denies justification by works, works of the law, and our own righteousness, does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. Tit. 3:3-7, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Works of righteousness that we have done are here excluded, as what we are neither saved nor justified by. The apostle expressly says, we are not saved by them, and it is evident that when he says this, he has respect to the affair of justification. And that he means, we are not *saved* by them in not being *justified* by them, as by the next verse but one, which is part of the same sentence, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

It is several ways manifest, that the apostle in this text, by "works of righteousness which we have done," does not mean only works of the ceremonial law. It appears by the 3d verse, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." These are breaches of the moral law, that the apostle observes they lived in before they were justified: and it is most plain that it is this which gives occasion to the apostle to observe, as he does in the 5th verse, that is was not by works of righteousness which they had done, that they were saved or justified.

But we need not go to the context, it is most apparent from the words themselves, that the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law. If he had only said, it is not by our own works of righteousness. What could we understand by works of righteousness, but only righteous works, or, which is the same thing, good works? And not say, that it is by our own righteous works that we are justified, though not by one

particular kind of righteous works, would certainly be a contradiction to such an assertion. But, the works are rendered yet more strong, plain, and determined in their sense, by those additional words, *which we have done,* which shows that the apostle intends to exclude all our own righteous or virtuous works universally. If it should be asserted concerning any commodity, treasure, or precious jewel, that it could not be procured by money, and not only so, but to make the assertion the more strong, it should be asserted with additional words, that it could not be procured by money that men possess, how unreasonable would it be, after all, to say that all that was meant was, that it could not be procured with brass money.

And what renders the interpreting of this text, as intending works of the ceremonial law, yet more unreasonable, is that these works were indeed no works of righteousness at all, but were only falsely supposed to be so by the Jews. And this our opponents in this doctrine also suppose is the very reason why we are not justified by them, because they are not works of righteousness, or because (the ceremonial law being now abrogated) there is no obedience in them. But how absurd is it to say, that the apostle, when he says we are not justified by works of righteousness that we have done, meant only works of the ceremonial law, and that for that very reason, because they are not works of righteousness? To illustrate this by the forementioned comparison: If it should be asserted, that such a thing could not be procured by money that men possess, how ridiculous would it be to say, that the meaning only was, that it could not be procured by counterfeit money, and that for that reason, because it was not money. What Scripture will stand before men, if they will take liberty to manage Scripture thus? Or what one text is there in the Bible that may not at this rate be explained all away, and perverted to any sense men please?

But further, if we should allow that the apostle intends only to oppose justification by works of the ceremonial law in this text, yet it is evident by the expression he uses, that he means to oppose it under that notion, or in that quality, of their being works of righteousness of our own doing. But if the apostle argues against our being justified by works of the ceremonial law, under the notion of their being of that nature and kind,

viz. works of our own doing, then it will follow that the apostle's argument is strong against, not only those, but all of that nature and kind, even all that are of our own doing.

If there were not other text in the Bible about justification but this, this would clearly and invincibly prove that we are not justified by any of our own goodness, virtue, or righteousness, or for the excellency or righteousness of anything that we have done in religion, because it is here so fully and strongly asserted. But this text abundantly confirms other texts of the apostle, where he denies justification by works of the law. No doubt can be rationally made, but that the apostle, when he shows, that God does not save us by "works of righteousness that we have done," verse 5, and that so we are "justified by grace," verse 7, herein opposing salvation by works, and salvation by grace — means the *same* works as he does in other places, where he in like manner opposes works and grace, as in Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." And the same works as in Rom. 4:4, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." And the same works that are spoken of in the context of the 24th verse of the foregoing chapter, which the apostle there calls "works of the law, being justified freely by his grace." And of the 4th chapter, 16th verse, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Where in the context the righteousness of faith is opposed to the righteousness of the law: for here God's saving us according to his mercy, and justifying us by grace, is opposed to saving us by works of righteousness that we have done. In the same manner as in those places, justifying us by his grace, is opposed to justifying us by works of the law.

10. The apostle could not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, because it is asserted of the saints under the Old Testament as well as New. If men are justified by their sincere obedience, it will then follow that formerly, before the ceremonial law was abrogated, men were justified by the works of the ceremonial law, as well as the moral. For if we are justified by our sincere obedience, then it alters not the case, whether the commands be moral or positive, provided they be God's commands, and our obedience be

obedience to God. And so the case must be just the same under the Old Testament, with the works of the moral law and ceremonial, according to the measure of the virtue of obedience there was in either. It is true, their obedience to the ceremonial law would have nothing to do in the affair of justification, unless it was sincere, and so neither would the works of the moral law. If obedience was the thing, then obedience to the ceremonial law, while that stood in force, and obedience to the moral law, had just the same sort of concern, according to the proportion of obedience that consists in each. As now under the New Testament, if obedience is what we are justified by, that obedience must doubtless comprehend obedience to all God's commands now in force, to the positive precepts of attendance on baptism and the Lord's supper, as well as moral precepts. If obedience be the thing, it is not because it is obedience to such a kind of commands, but because it is *obedience*. So that by this supposition, the saints under the Old Testament were justified, at least in part, by their obedience to the ceremonial law.

But it is evident that the saints under the Old Testament were not justified, in any measure, by the works of the ceremonial law. This may be proved, proceeding on the foot of our adversaries' own interpretation of the apostle's phrase, "the works of the law," and supposing them to mean by it only the works of the ceremonial law. To instance in David, it is evident that he was not justified in any wise by the works of the ceremonial law, by Rom. 4:6-8, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is plain that the apostle is here speaking of justification, from the preceding verse, and all the context; and the thing spoken of, *viz.* forgiving iniquities and covering sins, is what our adversaries themselves suppose to be justification, and even the whole of justification. This David, speaking of himself, says (by the apostle's interpretation) that he had *without* works. For it is manifest that David, in the words here cited, from the beginning of the 32d Psalm, has a special respect to himself: he speaks of his own sins being forgiven and not imputed to him: as appears by the words that immediately follow, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy

hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Let us therefore understand the apostle which way we will respecting works, when he says, "David describes the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works," whether of all manner of works, or only works of the ceremonial law, yet it is evident at least, that David was not justified by works of the ceremonial law. Therefore here is the argument: if our own obedience be that by which men are justified, then under the Old Testament, men were justified partly by obedience to the ceremonial law (as has been proved). But the saints under the Old Testament were not justified partly by the works of the ceremonial law. Therefore men's own obedience is not that by which they are justified.

11. Another argument that the apostle, when he speaks of the two opposite ways of justification, one by the works of the law, and the other by faith, does not mean only the works of the ceremonial law, may be taken from Rom. 10:5, 6. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things, shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise," etc. — Here two things are evident.

(1) That the apostle here speaks of the same two opposite ways of justification, one by the righteousness which is of the law, the other by faith, that he had treated of in the former part of the epistle. And therefore it must be the same law that is here spoken of. The same law is here meant as in the last verses of the foregoing chapter, where he says, the Jews had "not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;" as is plain, because the apostle is still speaking of the same thing. The words are a continuation of the same discourse, as may be seen at first glance, by anyone that looks on the context.

(2.) It is manifest that Moses, when he describes the righteousness which is of the law, or the way of justification by the law, in the words here cited, "He that doth those things, shall live in them," does not speak only, nor chiefly, of the works of the ceremonial law; for none will pretend that God

ever made such a covenant with man, that he who kept the ceremonial law should live in it, or that there ever was a time, that it was chiefly by the works of the ceremonial law that men lived and were justified. Yea, it is manifest by the forementioned instance of David, mentioned in the 4th of Romans, that there never was a time wherein men were justified in any measure by the works of the ceremonial law, as has been just now shown. Moses therefore, in those words which, the apostle says, are a description of the righteousness which is of the law, cannot mean only the ceremonial law. And therefor it follows, that when the apostle speaks of justification by the works of the law, as opposite to justification by faith, he does not mean only the ceremonial law, but also the works of the moral law, which are the things spoken of by Moses, when he says, "He that doth those things, shall live in them." And these are the things which the apostle in this very place is arguing that we cannot be justified by, as is evident by the last verses of the preceding chapter; "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," etc. And in the 3d verse of this chapter, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

And further, how can the apostle's description that he here gives from Moses, of this exploded way of justification by the works of the law, consist with the Arminian scheme, of a way of justification by the virtue of a sincere obedience, that still remains as the true and only way of justification under the gospel? It is most apparent that it is the design of the apostle to give a description of both the legal rejected and the evangelical valid ways of justification, in that wherein they are distinguished the one from the other. But how is it, that "he who doth those things, shall live in them," *that* wherein the way of justification by the works of the law is distinguished from that in which Christians under the gospel are justified, according to their scheme. For still, according to them, it may be said, in the same manner, of the precepts of the gospel, he that does these things, shall live in them. The difference lies only in the things to be done, but not at all in that the doing of them is not the condition of living in them, just in the one case, as in the other. The

words, “He that does them, shall live in them,” will serve just as well for a description of the latter as the former. By the apostle’s saying, the righteousness of the law is described thus, he that doth these things, shall live in them. But the righteousness of faith saith thus, plainly intimates that the righteousness of faith saith otherwise, and in an opposite manner. Besides, if these words cited from Moses are actually said by him of the moral law as well as ceremonial, as it is most evident they are, it renders it still more absurd to suppose them mentioned by the apostle, as the very note of distinction between justification by a ceremonial obedience, and a moral sincere obedience, as the Arminians must suppose.

Thus I have spoken to a second argument, to prove that we are not justified by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own, *viz.* that to suppose otherwise, is contrary to the doctrine directly urged, and abundantly insisted on, by the apostle Paul in his epistles.

I now proceed to a

Third argument, *viz.* that to suppose that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, or any of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace.

That scheme of justification that manifestly takes from, or diminishes the grace of God, is undoubtedly to be rejected; for it is the declared design of God in the gospel to exalt the freedom and riches of his grace, in that method of justification of sinners, and way of admitting them to his favor, and the blessed fruits of it, which it declares. The Scripture teaches, that the way of justification appointed in the gospel covenant is appointed for that end, that free grace might be expressed, and glorified, Rom. 4:16, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” The exercising and magnifying of free grace in the gospel contrivance for the justification and salvation of sinners, is evidently the chief design of it. And this freedom and riches of grace in the gospel is everywhere spoken of in Scripture as the chief glory of it. Therefore that doctrine which derogates from the free grace of God in justifying sinners, as it is most opposite to God’s design, so it must be exceedingly offensive to him.

Those who maintain, that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, pretend that their scheme does not diminish the grace of the gospel; for they say, that the grace of God is wonderfully manifested in appointing such a way and method of salvation by sincere obedience, in assisting us to perform such an obedience, and in accepting our imperfect obedience, instead of perfect.

Let us therefore examine that matter, whether their scheme of a man's being justified by his own virtue and sincere obedience, does derogate from the grace of God or no, or whether free grace is not more exalted in supposing, as we do, that we are justified without any manner of goodness of our own. In order to this, I will lay down the self-evident

Proposition, that whatsoever that be by which the abundant benevolence of the giver is expressed, and gratitude in the receiver is obliged, that magnifies free grace. This I suppose none will ever controvert or dispute. And it is not much less evident, that it does both show a more abundant benevolence in the giver when he shows kindness without goodness or excellency in the object, to move him to it, and that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.

1. It shows a more abundant goodness in the giver, when he shows kindness without any excellency in our persons or actions that should move the giver to love and beneficence. For it certainly shows the more abundant and overflowing goodness, or disposition to communicate good, by how much the less loveliness or excellency there is to entice beneficence. The less there is in the receiver to draw goodwill and kindness, it argues the more of the principle of goodwill and kindness in the giver. One that has but a little of a principle of love and benevolence, may be drawn to do good, and to show kindness, when there is a great deal to draw him, or when there is much excellency and loveliness in the object to move goodwill. When he whose goodness and benevolence is more abundant, [he] will show kindness where there is less to draw it forth. For he does not so much need to have it drawn from without, he has enough of the principle within to move him of itself. Where there is most of the principle, there it is most sufficient for itself, and stands in least need of something without to excite it. For certainly a more abundant goodness more easily flows forth with less to impel or draw it,

than where there is less, or, which is the same thing, the more anyone is disposed of himself, the less he needs from without himself, to put him upon it, or stir him up to it. And therefore his kindness and goodness appears the more exceeding great, when it is bestowed without any excellency or loveliness at all in the receiver, or when the receiver is respected in the gift, as wholly without excellency. And much more still when the benevolence of the giver not only finds nothing in the receiver to draw it, but a great deal of hatefulness to repel it. The abundance of goodness is then manifested, not only in flowing forth without anything extrinsic to put it forward, but in overcoming great repulsion in the object. And then does kindness and love appear most triumphant, and wonderfully great, when the receiver is not only wholly without all excellency or beauty to attract it, but altogether, yea, infinitely vile and hateful.

2. It is apparent also that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that the less worthy or excellent the object of benevolence, or the receiver of kindness is, the more he is obliged, and the greater gratitude is due. He therefore is most of all obliged, that receives kindness without any goodness or excellency in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness. And as it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the Word of God. How often does God in the Scripture insist on this argument with men, to move them to love him, and to acknowledge his kindness? How much does he insist on this as an obligation to gratitude, that they are so sinful, and undeserving, and ill-deserving?

Therefore it certainly follows, that the doctrine which teaches that God, when he justifies a man, and shows him such great kindness as to give him a right to eternal life, does not do it for any obedience, or any manner of goodness of his, but that justification respects a man as ungodly, and wholly without any manner of virtue, beauty, or excellency. I say, this doctrine does certainly more exalt the free grace of God in justification, and man's obligation to gratitude for such a favor, than the contrary doctrine, *viz.* that God, in showing this kindness to man, respects him as sincerely obedient and virtuous, and as having something in him that is truly excellent and lovely, and acceptable in his sight, and that this

goodness or excellency of man is the very fundamental condition of the bestowment of that kindness on him, or of distinguishing him from others by that benefit.

But I hasten to a

Fourth argument for the truth of the doctrine: that to suppose a man is justified by his own virtue or obedience, derogates from the honor of the Mediator, and ascribes that to man's virtue which belongs only to the righteousness of Christ: It puts man in Christ's stead, and makes him his own savior, in a respect in which Christ only is his Savior. And so it is a doctrine contrary to the nature and design of the gospel, which is to abase man, and to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to Christ the Redeemer. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is a gospel doctrine.

Here I would *explain* what we mean by the *imputation* of Christ's righteousness. *Prove* the thing intended by it to be true. *Show* that this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience.

1. I would explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption, whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God, and so implies the imputation both of Christ's satisfaction and obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience of Christ. — And by that righteousness being *imputed* to us, is meant no other than this, that the righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness which ought to be in ourselves. Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves. And so we suppose that a title to eternal life is given us as the reward of this righteousness. The Scripture uses the word *impute* in this sense, *viz.* for reckoning anything belonging to any person, to another person's account: As Phm. 18, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account."

The opposers of this doctrine suppose that there is an absurdity in supposing that God imputes Christ's obedience to us. It is to suppose that God is mistaken, and thinks that we performed that obedience which Christ performed. But why cannot that righteousness be reckoned to our account, and be accepted for us, without any such absurdity? Why is there any more absurdity in it, than in a merchant's transferring debt or credit from one man's account to another, when one man pays a price for another, so that it shall be accepted as if that other had paid it? Why is there any more absurdity in supposing that Christ's obedience is imputed to us, than that his satisfaction is imputed? If Christ has suffered the penalty of the law in our stead, then it will follow, that his suffering that penalty is imputed to us, that is, accepted for us, and in our stead, and is reckoned to our account, as though we had suffered it. But why may not his obeying the law of God be as rationally reckoned to our account, as his suffering the penalty of the law? Why may not a price to bring into debt, be as rationally transferred from one person's account to another, as a price to pay a debt? Having thus explained what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, I proceed,

2. To prove that the righteousness of Christ is thus imputed.

(1.) There is the very same need of Christ's obeying the law in our stead, in order to the reward, as of his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead, in order to our escaping the penalty, and the same reason why one should be accepted on our account, as the other. There is the same need of one as the other, that the law of God might be answered: one was as requisite to answer the law as the other. It is certain, that was the reason why there was need that Christ should suffer the penalty for us, even that the law might be answered. For this the Scripture plainly teaches. This is given as the reason why Christ was made a curse for us, that the law threatened a curse to us, Gal. 3:10, 13. But the same law that fixes the curse of God as the consequence of not continuing in all things written in the law to do them (verse 10) has as much fixed doing those things as an antecedent of living in them (as verse 12). There is as much connection established in one case as in the other. There is therefore exactly the same need, from the law, of perfect obedience being fulfilled in order to our

obtaining the reward, as there is of death being suffered in order to our escaping the punishment, or the same necessity by the law, of perfect obedience preceding life, as there is of disobedience being succeeded by death. The law is, without doubt, as much of an established rule in one case as in the other.

Christ by suffering the penalty, and so making atonement for us, only removes the guilt of our sins, and so sets us in the same state that Adam was in the first moment of his creation, and it is no more fit that we should obtain eternal life only on that account, than that Adam should have the reward of eternal life, or of a confirmed and unalterable state of happiness, the first moments of his existence, without any obedience at all. Adam was not to have the reward merely on account of his being innocent. If [that were] so, he would have had it fixed upon him at once, as soon as ever he was created, for he was as innocent then as he could be. But he was to have the reward on account of his active obedience: not on account merely of his not having done ill, but on account of his doing well.

So on the same account we have not eternal life merely as void of guilt, which we have by the atonement of Christ, but on the account of Christ's active obedience, and doing well. — Christ is our second federal head, and is called the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:22), because he acted that part for us, which the first Adam should have done. When he had undertaken to stand in our stead, he was looked upon and treated as though he were guilty with our guilt. By his bearing the penalty, he did as it were free himself from this guilt. But by this the second Adam did only bring himself into the state in which the first Adam was on the first moment of his existence, *viz.* a state of mere freedom from guilt, and hereby indeed was free from any obligation to suffer punishment. But this being supposed, there was need of something further, even a positive obedience, in order to his obtaining, as our second Adam, the reward of eternal life.

God saw meet to place man first in a state of trial, and not to give him a title to eternal life as soon as he had made him, because it was his will that he should first give honor to his authority, by fully submitting to it, in will and act, and perfectly obeying his law. God insisted upon it, that his

holy majesty and law should have their due acknowledgment and honor from man, such as became the relation he stood in to that Being who created him, before he would bestow the reward of confirmed and everlasting happiness upon him. Therefore God gave him a law that he might have opportunity, by giving due honor to his authority in obeying it, to obtain this happiness. It therefore became Christ — seeing that, in assuming man to himself, he sought a title to this eternal happiness for him after he had broken the law — that he himself should become subject to God's authority, and be in the form of a servant, that he might do that honor to God's authority for him, by his obedience, which God at first required of man as the condition of his having a title to that reward. Christ came into the world to render the honor of God's authority and law consistent with the salvation and eternal life of sinners. He came to save them, and yet withal to assert and vindicate the honor of the lawgiver, and his holy law. Now, if the sinner, after his sin was satisfied for, had eternal life bestowed upon him without active righteousness, the honor of his law would not be sufficiently vindicated. Supposing this were possible, that the sinner could himself, by suffering, pay the debt, and afterwards be in the same state that he was in before his probation, that is to say, negatively righteous, or merely without guilt. If he now at last should have eternal life bestowed upon him, without performing that condition of obedience, then God would recede from his law, and would give the promised reward, and his law never have respect and honor shown to it, in that way of being obeyed. But now Christ, by subjecting himself to the law, and obeying it, has done great honor to the law, and to the authority of God who gave it. That so glorious a person should become subject to the law, and fulfill it, has done much more to honor it, than if mere man had obeyed it. It was a thing infinitely honorable to God, that a person of infinite dignity was not ashamed to call him his God, and to adore and obey him as such. This was more to God's honor than if any mere creature, of any possible degree of excellence and dignity, had so done.

It is absolutely necessary, that in order to a sinner's being justified, the righteousness of some other should be reckoned to his account. For it is declared that the person justified is looked upon as (in himself) ungodly, but God neither will nor can justify a person without a righteousness. For

justification is manifestly a *forensic* term, as the word is used in Scripture, and a judicial thing, or the act of a judge. So that if a person should be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth. The sentence of justification would be a false sentence, unless there be a righteousness performed, that is, by the judge, properly looked upon as his. To say that God does not justify the sinner without sincere, though an imperfect obedience, does not help the case, for an imperfect righteousness before a judge is no righteousness. To accept of something that falls short of the rule, instead of something else that answers the rule, is no judicial act, or act of a judge, but a pure act of sovereignty. An imperfect righteousness is no righteousness before a judge: For "righteousness (as one observes) is a relative thing, and has always relation to a law. The formal nature of righteousness, properly understood, lies in a conformity of actions to that which is the rule and measure of them." Therefore that only is righteousness in the sight of a judge that answers the law. The law is the judge's rule. If he pardons and hides what really is, and so does not pass sentence according to what things are in themselves, he either does not act the part of a judge, or else judges falsely. The very notion of judging is to determine what is, and what is not in anyone's case. The judge's work is twofold: it is to determine first what is fact, and then whether what is in fact be according to rule, or according to the law. If a judge has no rule or law established beforehand, by which he should proceed in judging, he has no foundation to go upon in judging, he has no opportunity to be a judge, nor is it possible that he should do the part of a judge. To judge without a law, or rule by which to judge, is impossible. For the very notion of judging is to determine whether the object of judgment be according to rule. Therefore God has declared that when he acts as a judge, he will not justify the wicked, and cannot clear the guilty, and, by parity of reason, cannot justify without righteousness.

And the scheme of the old law's being abrogated, and a new law introduced, will not help at all in this difficulty. For an imperfect righteousness cannot answer the law of God we are under, whether that be an old or a new one, for every law requires perfect obedience to itself. Every rule whatsoever requires perfect conformity to itself, [and] it is a contradiction to suppose otherwise. For to say, that there is a law that

does not require perfect obedience to itself, is to say that there is a law that does not require all that it requires. That law that now forbids sin, is certainly the law that we are now under (let that be an old or a new one), or else it is not sin. That which is not forbidden, and is the breach of no law, is no sin. But if we are now forbidden to commit sin, then it is by a law that we are now under. For surely we are neither under the forbiddings nor commanding of a law that we are not under. Therefore, if all sin is now forbidden, then we are now under a law that requires perfect obedience, and therefore nothing can be accepted as a righteousness in the sight of our Judge, but perfect righteousness. So that our Judge cannot justify us, unless he sees a perfect righteousness in some way belonging to us, either performed by ourselves, or by another, and justly and duly reckoned to our account.

God does, in the sentence of justification, pronounce a man perfectly righteous, or else he would need a further justification after he is justified. His sins being removed by Christ's atonement, is not sufficient for his justification. For justifying a man, as has been already shown, is not merely pronouncing him innocent, or without guilt, but standing right with regard to the rule that he is under, and righteous unto life. But this, according to the established rule of nature, reason, and divine appointment, is a positive, perfect righteousness.

As there is the same need that Christ's obedience should be reckoned to our account, as that his atonement should, so there is the same reason why it should. As if Adam had persevered, and finished his course of obedience, we should have received the benefit of his obedience, as much as now we have the mischief of his disobedience. So in like manner, there is reason that we should receive the benefit of the second Adam's obedience, as of his atonement of our disobedience. Believers are represented in Scripture as being so in Christ, as that they are legally one, or accepted as one, by the Supreme Judge. Christ has assumed our nature, and has so assumed all, in that nature that belongs to him, into such an union with himself, that he is become their Head, and has taken them to be his members. And therefore, what Christ has done in our nature, whereby he did honor to the law and authority of God by his acts, as well as the reparation to the honor of the law by his sufferings, is

reckoned to the believer's account: so as that the believer should be made happy, because it was so well and worthily done by his Head, as well as freed from being miserable, because he has suffered for our ill and unworthy doing.

When Christ had once undertaken with God to stand for us, and put himself under our law, by that law he was obliged to suffer, and by the same law he was obliged to obey. By the same law, after he had taken man's guilt upon him, he himself being our surety, could not be acquitted till he had suffered, nor rewarded till he had obeyed. But he was not acquitted as a private person, but as our Head, and believers are acquitted in his acquittal. Nor was he accepted to a reward for his obedience, as a private person, but as our Head, and we are accepted to a reward in his acceptance. The Scripture teaches us, that when Christ was raised from the dead, he was justified, which justification, as I have already shown, implies both his acquittal from our guilt, and his acceptance to the exaltation and glory that was the reward of his obedience. But believers, as soon as they believe, are admitted to partake with Christ in this his justification. Hence we are told, that he was "raised again for our justification," (Rom. 4:25) which is true, not only of that part of his justification that consists in his acquittal, but also his acceptance to his reward. The Scripture teaches us, that he is exalted, and gone to heaven to take possession of glory in our name, as our forerunner, Heb. 6:20. We are as it were, both raised up together with Christ, and also made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and in him, Eph. 2:6.

If it be objected here, that there is this reason, why what Christ suffered should be accepted on our account, rather than the obedience he performed, that he was obliged to obedience for himself, but was not obliged to suffer but only on our account. To this I answer that Christ was not obliged, on his own account, to undertake to obey. Christ in his original circumstances, was in no subjection to the Father, being altogether equal with him. He was under no obligation to put himself in man's stead, and under man's law, or to put himself into any state of subjection to God whatsoever. There was a transaction between the Father and the Son, that was antecedent to Christ's becoming man, and being made under the law, wherein he undertook to put himself under the law, and both to obey and to suffer. In [this] transaction these things were already virtually done in the sight of God, as is evident by this: that God acted on the ground of that transaction, justifying and saving

sinners, as if the things undertaken had been actually performed long before they were performed indeed. And therefore, without doubt, in order to estimate the value and validity of what Christ did and suffered, we must look back to that transaction, wherein these things were first undertaken, and virtually done in the sight of God, and see what capacity and circumstances Christ acted in them. We shall find that Christ was under no manner of obligation, either to obey the law, or to suffer its penalty. After this he was equally under obligation to both, for henceforward he stood as our surety or representative. And therefore this consequent obligation may be as much of an objection against the validity of his suffering the penalty, as against his obedience. But if we look to that original transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein both these were undertaken and accepted as virtually done in the sight of the Father, we shall find Christ acting with regard to both as one perfectly in his own right, and under no manner of previous obligation to hinder the validity of either.

(2.) To suppose that all Christ does is only to make atonement for us by suffering, is to make him our Savior but in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as a Savior. For if so, all that he does is to deliver us from hell: he does not purchase heaven for us. The adverse scheme supposes that he purchases heaven for us, in that he satisfies for the imperfections of our obedience and so purchases that our sincere imperfect obedience might be accepted as the condition of eternal life, and so purchases an opportunity for us to obtain heaven by our own obedience. But to purchase heaven for us only in this sense, is to purchase it in no sense at all. For all of it comes to no more than a satisfaction for our sins, or removing the penalty by suffering in our stead. For all the purchasing they speak of, that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, is only his satisfying for the sinful imperfection of our obedience, or (which is the same thing) making atonement for the sin that our obedience is attended with. But that is not purchasing heaven, merely to set us at liberty again, that we may go and get heaven by what we do ourselves. All that Christ does is only to pay a debt for us. There is no positive purchase of any good. We are taught in Scripture that heaven is purchased for us. It is called the *purchased possession,* Eph. 1:14. The gospel proposes the eternal inheritance, not to be acquired, as the first covenant did, but as

already acquired and purchased. But he that pays a man's debt for him, and so delivers him from slavery, cannot be said to purchase an estate for him, merely because he sets him at liberty, so that henceforward he has an opportunity to get an estate by his own hand labor. So that according to this scheme, the saints in heaven have no reason to thank Christ for purchasing heaven for them, or redeeming them to God, and making them kings and priests, as we have an account that they do, in Rev. 5:9, 10.

(3.) Justification by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, is a doctrine that the Scripture teaches in very full terms, Rom. 5:18, 19, "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall all be made righteous." Here in one verse we are told that we have justification by Christ's righteousness, and that there might be no room to understand the righteousness spoken of, merely of Christ's atonement by his suffering the penalty. In the next verse it is put in other terms, and asserted that it is by Christ's obedience we are made righteous. It is scarcely possible anything should be more full and determined. The terms, taken singly, are such as fix their own meaning, and taken together, they fix the meaning of each other. The words show that we are justified by that righteousness of Christ which consists in his obedience, and that we are made righteous or justified by that obedience of his, that is, his righteousness, or moral goodness before God.

Here possibly it may be objected, that this text means only, that we are justified by Christ's passive obedience.

To this I answer, whether we call it active or passive, it alters not the case as to the present argument, as long as it is evident by the words that it is not merely under the notion of an atonement for disobedience, or a satisfaction for unrighteousness, but under the notion of a positive obedience, and a righteousness, or moral goodness, that it justifies us, or makes us righteous. Because both the words *righteousness* and *obedience* are used, and used too as the opposites to sin and disobedience, and an offense. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came

upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteousness." Now, what can be meant by righteousness, when spoken of as the opposite to sin, or moral evil, but moral goodness? What is the righteousness that is the opposite of an offense, but the behavior that is well pleasing? And what can be meant by obedience, when spoken of as the opposite of disobedience, or going contrary to a command, but a positive obeying and an actual complying with the command? So that there is no room for any invented distinction of active and passive, to hurt the argument from this scripture. For it is evident by it, as anything can be, that believers are justified by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, under the notion of his moral goodness; — his positive obeying, and actual complying with the commands of God, and that behavior which, because of its conformity to his commands, was well-pleasing in his sight. This is all that ever any need to desire to have granted in this dispute.

By this it appears, that if Christ's dying be here included in the words *righteousness* and *obedience*, it is not merely as a propitiation, or bearing a penalty of a broken law in our stead, but as his voluntary submitting and yielding himself to those sufferings, was an act of obedience to the Father's commands, and so was a part of his positive righteousness, or moral goodness.

Indeed all obedience considered under the notion of righteousness, is something active, something done in voluntary compliance with a command; whether it may be done without suffering, or whether it be hard and difficult. Yet as it is obedience, righteousness, or moral goodness, it must be considered as something voluntary and active. If anyone is commanded to go through difficulties and sufferings, and he, in compliance with this command, voluntarily does it, he properly obeys in so doing; and as he voluntarily does it in compliance with a command, his obedience is as active as any whatsoever. It is the same sort of obedience, a thing of the very same nature, as when a man, in compliance with a command, does a piece of hard service, or goes through hard labor; and there is no room to distinguish between such obedience of it, as if it were a thing of quite a different nature, by such opposite terms as active and

passive: all the disobeying an easy command and a difficult one. But is there from hence any foundation to make two species of obedience, one active and the other passive? There is no appearance of any such distinction ever entering into the hearts of any of the penmen of Scripture.

It is true, that of late, when a man refuses to obey the precept of a human law, but patiently yields himself up to suffer the penalty of the law, it is called *passive* obedience. But this I suppose is only a modern use of the word *obedience*. Surely it is a sense of the word that the Scripture is a perfect stranger to. It is improperly called obedience, unless there be such a precept in the law, that he shall yield himself patiently to suffer, to which his so doing shall be an active voluntary conformity. There may in some sense be said to be a conformity of the law in a person's suffering the penalty of the law. But no other conformity to the law is properly called obedience to it, but an active voluntary conformity to the precepts of it. The word *obey* is often found in Scripture with respect to the law of God to man, but never in any other sense.

It is true that Christ's *willingly* undergoing those sufferings which he endured, is a great part of that obedience or righteousness by which we are justified. The sufferings of Christ are respected in Scripture under a twofold consideration, either merely as his being substituted for us, or put into our stead, in suffering the penalty of the law. And so his sufferings are considered as a satisfaction and propitiation for sin, or as he, in obedience to a law or a command of the Father, voluntarily submitted himself to those sufferings, and actively yielded himself up to bear them. So they are considered as his righteousness, and a part of his active obedience. Christ underwent death in obedience to the command of the Father, Psa. 40:6-8, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." John 10:17-18, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John 18:11, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I

not drink it?" And this is part, and indeed the principal part, of that active obedience by which we are justified.

It can be no just objection against this, that the command of the Father to Christ that he should lay down his life was no part of the law that we had broken, and therefore, that his obeying this command could be no part of that obedience that he performed for us, because we needed that he should obey no other law for us, but only that which we had broken or failed of obeying. For although it must be the same legislative authority, whose honor is repaired by Christ's obedience, that we have injured by our disobedience, yet there is no need that the law which Christ obeys should be precisely the same that Adam was to have obeyed, in that sense, that there should be no positive precepts wanting, nor any added. There was wanting the precept about the forbidden fruit, and there was added the ceremonial law. The thing required was perfect obedience. It is no matter whether the positive precepts that Christ was to obey, were much more than equivalent to what was wanting, because infinitely more difficult, particularly the command that he had received to lay down his life, which was his principal act of obedience, and which, above all other, is concerned in our justification. As that act of disobedience by which we fell, was disobedience to a positive precept that Christ never was under, *viz*. That of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so that act of obedience by which principally we are redeemed is obedience to a positive precept, that should try both Adam's and Christ's obedience. Such precepts are the greatest and most proper trial of obedience, because in them, the mere authority and will of the legislator is the sole ground of the obligation (and nothing in the nature of the things themselves), and therefore they are the greatest trial of any persons' respect to that authority and will.

The law that Christ was subject to, and obeyed, was in some sense the same that was given to Adam. There are innumerable particular duties required by the law only conditionally, and in such circumstances, are comprehended in some great and general rule of that law. Thus, for instance, there are innumerable acts of respect and obedience to men, which are required by the law of nature (which was a law given to Adam), which yet are not required absolutely, but upon many prerequisite

conditions: as that there be men standing in such relations to us, and that they give forth such commands, and the like. So many acts of respect and obedience to God are included, in like manner, in the moral law conditionally, or such and such things being supposed: as Abraham's going about to sacrifice his son, the Jews' circumcising their children when eight days old, and Adam's not eating the forbidden fruit. They are virtually comprehended in the great general rule of the moral law, that we should obey God, and be subject to him in whatsoever he pleases to command us. Certainly the moral law does as much require us to obey God's positive commands, as it requires us to obey the positive commands of our parents. And thus all that Adam, and all that Christ was commanded, even his observing the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish worship, and his laying down his life, was virtually included in this same great law.

It is no objection against the last-mentioned thing, even in Christ's laying down his life, it being included in the moral law given to Adam, because that law itself allowed of no occasion for any such thing. For the moral law virtually includes all right acts, on all possible occasions, even occasions that the law itself allows not. Thus we are obliged by the moral law to mortify our lusts, and repent of our sins, though that law allows of no lust to mortify, or sin to repent of.

There is indeed but one great law of God, and that is the same law that says, "if thou sinnest, thou shalt die;" and "curses is every one that continues not in all things contained in this law to do them." All duties of positive institution are virtually comprehended in this law: and therefore, if the Jews broke the ceremonial law, it exposed them to the penalty of the law, or covenant of works, which threatened, "thou shalt surely die." The law is the eternal and unalterable rule of righteousness between God and man, and therefore is the rule of judgment, but which all that a man does shall be either justified or condemned; and no sin exposes to damnation, but by the law. So now he that refuses to obey the precepts that require an attendance on the sacraments of the New Testament, is exposed to damnation, by virtue of the law or covenant of works. It may moreover be argued that all sins whatsoever are breaches of the law or covenant of works, because all sins, even breaches of the positive

precepts, as well as others, have atonement by the death of Christ. But what Christ died for, was to satisfy the law, or to bear the curse of the law; as appears by Gal. 3:10-13 and Rom. 7:3, 4.

So that Christ's laying down his life might be part of that obedience by which we are justified, though it was a positive precept not given to Adam. It was doubtless Christ's main act of obedience, because it was obedience to a command that was attended with immensely the greatest difficulty, and so to a command that was the greatest trial of his obedience. His respect shown to God in it, and his honor to God's authority, was proportionably great. It is spoken of in Scripture as Christ's principal act of obedience. Phil. 2:7, 8, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." And it therefore follows from what has been already said, that it is mainly by this act of obedience that believers in Christ also have the reward of glory, or come to partake with Christ in his glory. We are as much saved by the death of Christ, as his yielding himself to die was an act of obedience, as we are as it was a propitiation for our sins. For as it was not only the only act of obedience that merited, he having performed meritorious acts of obedience through the whole course of his life, so neither was it the only suffering that was propitiatory; all his sufferings through the whole course of his life being propitiatory, as well as every act of obedience meritorious. Indeed this was his principal suffering, and it was as much his principal act of obedience.

Hence we may see how that the death of Christ did not only make atonement, but also merited eternal life, and hence we may see how by the blood of Christ, we are not only redeemed from sin, but redeemed unto God. Therefore the Scripture seems everywhere to attribute the whole of salvation to the blood of Christ. This precious blood is as much the main price by which heaven is purchased, as it is the main price by which we are redeemed from hell. The positive righteousness of Christ, or that price by which he merited, was of equal value with that by which he

satisfied, for indeed it was the same price. He spilled his blood to satisfy, and by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, his sufferings were looked upon as of infinite value, and equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a finite creature. And he spilled his blood out of respect to the honor of God's majesty, and in submission to his authority, who had commanded him so to do. His obedience therein was of infinite value, both because of the dignity of the person that performed it, and because he put himself to infinite expense to perform it, whereby the infinite degree of his regard to God's authority appeared.

One would wonder what Arminians mean by Christ's merits. They talk of Christ's merits as much as anybody, and yet deny the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness. What should there be than anyone should merit or deserve anything by, besides righteousness or goodness? If anything that Christ did or suffered, merited or deserved anything, it was by virtue of the goodness, or righteousness, or holiness of it. If Christ's sufferings and death merited heaven, it must be because there was an excellent righteousness and transcendent moral goodness in that act of laying down his life. And if by that excellent righteousness he merited heaven for us, then surely that righteousness is reckoned to our account, that we have the benefit of it, or, which is the same thing, it is imputed to us.

Thus, I hope, I have made it evident, that the righteousness of Christ is indeed imputed to us.

3. I proceed now to the third and last thing under this argument: That this doctrine, of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience. If acceptance to God's favor, and a title to life, be given to believers as the reward of Christ's obedience, then it is not given as the reward of our own obedience. In what respect soever Christ is our Savior, that doubtless excludes our being our own saviors in that same respect. If we can be our own saviors in the same respect that Christ is, it will thence follow, that the salvation of Christ is needless in that respect, according to the apostle's reasoning, Gal. 5:4, "Christ is rendered of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." Doubtless, it is Christ's prerogative to be our Savior in that sense wherein he is our Savior. And

therefore, if it be by his obedience that we are justified, then it is not by our own obedience.

Here perhaps it may be said, that a title to salvation is not directly given as the reward of our obedience. For that is not by anything of ours, but only by Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, but yet an interest in that satisfaction and righteousness is given as a reward of our obedience.

But this does not at all help the case. For this is to ascribe as much to our obedience as if we ascribed salvation to it directly, without the intervention of Christ's righteousness. For it would be as great a thing for God to give us Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness, in reward for our obedience, as to give us heaven immediately. It would be as great a reward, and as great a testimony of respect to our obedience. And if God gives as great a thing as salvation for our obedience, why could he not as well give salvation itself directly? Then there would have been no need of Christ's righteousness. And indeed if God gives us Christ, or an interest in him, properly in reward for our obedience, he does really give us salvation in reward for our obedience: for the former implies the latter. Yea, it implies it, as the greater implies the less. So that indeed it exalts our virtue and obedience more, to suppose that God gives us Christ in reward of that virtue and obedience, than if he should give salvation without Christ.

The thing that the Scripture guards and militates against, is our imagining that it is our own goodness, virtue, or excellency, that instates us in God's acceptance and favor. But to suppose that God gives us an interest in Christ in reward for our virtue, is as great an argument that it instates us in God's favor, as if he bestowed a title to eternal life as its direct reward. If God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward of our obedience, it will then follow, that we are instated in God's acceptance and favor by our own obedience, antecedent to our having an interest in Christ. For a rewarding anyone's excellency, evermore supposes favor and acceptance on the account of that excellency. It is the very notion of a reward, that it is a good thing, bestowed in testimony of respect and favor for the virtue or excellency rewarded. So that it is not by virtue of our interest in Christ and his merits, that we first come into favor with God, according to this scheme. For we are in God's favor before we have any

interest in those merits, in that we have an interest in those merits given as a fruit of God's favor for our own virtue. If our interest in Christ be the fruit of God's favor, then it cannot be the ground of it. If God did not accept us, and had no favor for us for our own excellency, he never would bestow so great a reward upon us, as a right in Christ's satisfaction, and righteousness. So that such a scheme destroys itself. For it supposes that Christ's satisfaction and righteousness are necessary for us to recommend us to the favor of God, and yet supposes that we have God's favor and acceptance before we have Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, and have these given as a fruit of God's favor.

Indeed, neither salvation itself, nor Christ the Savior, are given as a reward of anything in man: They are not given as a reward of faith, nor anything else of ours: We are not united to Christ as a reward of our faith, but have union with him by faith, only as faith is the very act of uniting or closing *on our part*. As when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage, he does not give himself to her as a *reward* of her receiving him in marriage. Her receiving him is not considered as a worthy deed in her, for which he rewards her by giving himself to her. But it is by her receiving him that the union is made, by which she has him for her husband. It is *on her part* the unition itself. By these things it appears how contrary to the gospel of Christ their scheme is, who say that faith justifies as a principle of obedience, or as a leading act of obedience, or (as others) the sum and comprehension of all evangelical obedience. For by this, the obedience or virtue that is in faith gives it its justifying influence, and that is the same thing as to say, that we are justified by our own obedience, virtue, or goodness.

Having thus considered the evidence of the truth of the doctrine, I proceed now to the

III. Thing proposed, *viz*. "To show in what sense the acts of a Christian life, or of evangelical obedience, may be looked upon to be concerned in this affair."

From what has been said already, it is manifest that they cannot have any concern in this affair as good works, or by virtue of any moral goodness in them: not as works of the law, or as that moral excellency, or any part of

it, which is the fulfillment of that great, universal, and everlasting law or covenant of works which the great lawgiver has established, as the highest and unalterable rule of judgment, which Christ alone answers, or does anything towards it.

It having been shown out of the Scripture, that it is only by faith, or the soul's receiving and uniting to the Savior who has wrought our righteousness, that we are justified. It therefore remains, that the acts of a Christian life cannot be concerned in this affair any otherwise than as they imply, and are the expressions of faith, and may be looked upon as so many acts of reception of Christ the Savior. But the determining what concerns acts of Christian obedience can have in justification in this respect, will depend on the resolving of another point, *viz.* whether any other act of faith besides the first act, has any concern in our justification, or how far perseverance in faith, or the continued and renewed acts of faith, have influence in this affair. And it seems manifest that justification is by the first act of faith, in some respects, in a peculiar manner, because a sinner is actually and finally justified as soon as he has performed one act of faith, and faith in its first act does, virtually at least, depend on God for perseverance, and entities to this among other benefits. But yet the perseverance of faith is not excluded in this affair. It is not only certainly connected with justification, but it is not to be excluded from that on which the justification of a sinner has a dependence, or that by which he is justified.

I have shown that the way in which justification has a dependence on faith is, that it is the qualification on which the congruity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ depends, or wherein such a fitness consists. But the consideration of the perseverance of faith cannot be excluded out of this congruity or fitness. For it is congruous that he that believes in Christ should have an interest in Christ's righteousness, and so in the eternal benefits purchased by it, because faith is that by which the soul has union or oneness with Christ. There is a natural congruity in it, that they who are one with Christ should have a joint interest with him in his eternal benefits. But yet this congruity depends on its being an abiding union. As it is needful that the branch should abide in the vine, in order to its receiving the lasting benefits of the root, so it is necessary that the

soul should abide in Christ, in order to its receiving those lasting benefits of God's final acceptance and favor. John 15:6, 7, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth, as a branch. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:9, 10, "Continue ye in my love. If ye keep (or abide in) my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." There is the same reason why it is necessary that the union with Christ should remain, as why it should be begun: why it should continue to be, as why it should once be. If it should be begun without remaining, the beginning would be in vain. In order to the soul's being now in a justified state, and now free from condemnation, it is necessary that it should now be in Christ, and not merely that it should once have been in him. Rom. 8:1, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The soul is saved in Christ, as being now in him, when the salvation is bestowed, and not merely as remembering that it once was in him. Phil. 3:9, "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." 1 John 2:28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." In order for people to be blessed after death, it is necessary not only that they should once be in him, but that they should die in him. Rev. 14:13, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." And there is the same reason why faith, the uniting qualification, should remain in order to the union's remaining, as why it should once be, in order to the union's once being.

So that although the sinner is actually and finally justified on the first act of faith, yet the perseverance of faith, even then, comes into consideration, as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. God in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner's first believing, has respect to perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith, and it is looked upon, and taken by him that justifies, as being as it were a property in that faith. God has respect to the believer's continuance in faith, and he is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment it shall follow, and it being by divine constitution connected with that first faith, as much as if it were a

property in it, it is then considered as such, and so justification is not suspended. But were it not for this, it would be needful that it should be suspended, till the sinner had actually persevered in faith.

And that it is so, that God in the act of final justification which he passes at the sinner's conversion, has respect to perseverance in faith, and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in the first act, is further manifest by this, *viz.* That in a sinner's justification, at his conversion there is virtually contained a forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment, not only of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that they shall be guilty of, because that first justification is decisive and final. And yet pardon, in the order of nature, properly follows the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime pardoned, as is manifest both from reason and Scripture. David, in the beginning of Psalm 32 speaks of the forgiveness of sins which were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent on those sins, and on his repentance and faith with respect to them, and yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the 4th of Romans, as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin David there speaks of is the same that he committed in the matter of Uriah, and so the pardon the same with that release from death or eternal punishment, which the prophet Nathan speaks of, 2 Sam. 12:13, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Not only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in the order of time, but the pardon itself, in the order of nature, follows David's repentance and faith with respect to this sin. For it is spoken of in Psalm 32 as depending on it.

But inasmuch as a sinner, in his first justification, is forever justified and freed from all obligation to eternal punishment, it hence of necessity follows, that future faith and repentance are beheld, in that justification, as virtually contained in that first faith and repentance. Because repentance of those future sins, and faith in a Redeemer, with respect to them, or at least, the continuance of that habit and principle in the heart that has such an actual repentance and faith in its nature and tendency, is now made sure by God's promise. — If remission of sins committed after conversion, in the order of nature, follows that faith and repentance that is after them, then it follows that future sins are respected in the first

justification, no otherwise than as future faith and repentance are respected in it. And future repentance and faith are looked upon by him that justifies, as virtually implied in the first repentance and faith, in the same manner as justification from future sins is virtually implied in the first justification, which is the thing that was to be proved.

And besides, if no other act of faith could be concerned in justification but the first act, it will then follow that Christians ought never to seek justification by any other act of faith. For if justification is not to be obtained by after acts of faith, then surely it is not a duty to seek it by such acts. And so it can never be a duty for persons after they are once converted, by faith to seek God, or believingly to look to him for the remission of sin, or deliverance from the guilt of it, because deliverance from the guilt of sin, is part of what belongs to justification. And if it be not proper for converts by faith to look to God through Christ for it, then it will follow that it is not proper for them to pray for it. For Christian prayer to God for a blessing, is but an expression of faith in God for that blessing: prayer is only the voice of faith. But if these things are so, it will follow that the petition in the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts,* is not proper to be put up by the disciples of Christ, or to be used in Christian assemblies, and that Christ improperly directed his disciples to use that petition, when they were all of them, except Judas, converted before. The debt that Christ directs his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of, can mean nothing else but the punishment that sin deserves, or the debt that we owe to divine justice, the ten thousand talents we owe our Lord. To pray that God would forgive our debts, is undoubtedly the same thing as to pray that God would release us from obligation to due punishment. But releasing from obligation to the punishment due to sin, and forgiving the debt that we owe to divine justice, is what appertains to justification.

Then to suppose that no after acts of faith are concerned in the business of justification, and so that it is not proper for any ever to seek justification by such acts, would be forever to cut off those Christians that are doubtful concerning their first act of faith, from the joy and peace of believing. As the business of a justifying faith is to obtain pardon and peace with God by looking to God, and trusting in him for these blessings, so the joy and peace of that faith is in the apprehension of pardon and

peace obtained by such a trust. This a Christian that is doubtful of his first act of faith cannot have from that act, because, by the supposition, he is doubtful whether it be an act of faith, and so whether be did obtain pardon and peace by that act. The proper remedy, in such a case, is now by faith to look to God in Christ for these blessings, but he is cut off from this remedy, because he is uncertain whether he his warrant so to do. For he does not know but that he has believed already, and if so, then he has no warrant to look to God by faith for these blessings now, because, by the supposition, no new act of faith is a proper means of obtaining these blessings. So he can never properly obtain the joy of faith, for there are acts of true faith that are very weak, and the first act may be so as well as others. It may be like the first motion of the infant in the womb: it may be so weak an act, that the Christian, by examining it, may never be able to determine whether it was a true act of faith or no. It is evident from fact, and abundant experience, that many Christians are forever at a loss to determine which was their first act of faith. And those saints who have had a good degree of satisfaction concerning their faith, may be subject to great declensions and falls, in which case they are liable to great fears of eternal punishment. The proper way of deliverance, is to forsake their sin by repentance, and by faith now to come to Christ for deliverance from the deserved eternal punishment. But this it would not be, if deliverance from that punishment was not this way to be obtained.

But what is a still more plain and direct evidence of what I am now arguing for, is that the act of faith which Abraham exercised in the great promise of the covenant of grace that God made to him, of which it is expressly said, Gal. 3:6, “It was accounted to him for righteousness” — the grand instance and proof that the apostle so much insists upon throughout Romans 4, and Galatians 3, to confirm his doctrine of justification by faith alone — was not Abraham’s first act of faith, but was exerted long after he had by faith forsaken his own country, Heb. 11:8, and had been treated as an eminent friend of God.

Moreover, the apostle Paul, in Philippians 3, tells us how earnestly he sought justification by faith, or to win Christ and obtain that righteousness which was by the faith of him, in what he did after his conversion. Phil. 3:8, 9, “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things,

and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And in the two next verses he expresses the same thing in other words, and tells us how he went through sufferings, and became conformable to Christ's death, that he might be a partaker with Christ in the benefit of his resurrection, which the same apostle elsewhere teaches us, is especially justification. Christ's resurrection was his justification. In this, he that was put to death in the flesh, was justified by the Spirit, and he that was delivered for our offenses, rose again for our justification. And the apostle tells us in the verses that follow in that third chapter of Philippians, that he thus sought to attain the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and so to partake of the benefit of his resurrection, still as though he had not already attained, but that he continued to follow after it.

On the whole, it appears that the perseverance of faith is necessary, even to the congruity of justification, and that not the less, because a sinner is justified, and perseverance promised, on the first act of faith. But God, in that justification, has respect, not only to the past act of faith, but to his own promise of future acts, and to the fitness of a qualification beheld as yet only in his own promise. And that perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation, not merely as a *sine qua non*, or as a universal concomitant of it, but by reason of such an influence and dependence, seems manifest by many Scriptures, I would mention two or three — Heb. 3:6, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Verse 14, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." Heb. 6:12, "Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Rom. 11:20, "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off; but thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

And, as the congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act, so oftentimes the manifestation of justification in the conscience, arises a great deal more from after acts, than the first act. All the difference whereby the first act of faith has a concern in this affair that is peculiar, seems to be, as it were, only an

accidental difference, arising from the circumstance of time, or its being first in order of time, and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, or any influence it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation.

And thus it is that a truly Christian walk, and the acts of an evangelical, child-like, believing obedience, are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be sometimes so spoken of in Scripture, *viz.* as an expression of a persevering faith in the Son of God, the only Savior. Faith unites to Christ, and so gives a congruity to justification, not merely as remaining a dormant principle in the heart, but as being and appearing in its active expressions. The obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical, and performed with the Spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has all relation to Christ the Mediator, and is but an expression of the soul's believing unition to Christ. All evangelical works are works of that faith that worketh by love, and every such act of obedience, wherein it is inward, and the act of the soul, is only a new effective act of reception of Christ, and adherence to the glorious Savior. Hence that of the apostle, Gal. 2:20, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God." And hence we are directed, in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. 3:17.

And that God in justification has respect, not only to the first act of faith, but also to future persevering acts, as expressed in life, seems manifest by Rom. 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." And Heb. 10:38, 39, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul."

So that, as was before said of faith, so may it be said of a child-like believing obedience: it has no concern in justification by any virtue or excellency in it, but only as there is a reception of Christ in it. And this is no more contrary to the apostle's frequent assertion of our being justified without the works of the law, than to say that we are justified by faith. For faith is as much a work, or act of Christian obedience, as the expressions of faith, in spiritual life and walk. And therefore, as we say that faith does not justify as a work, so we say of all these effective expressions of faith.

This is the reverse of the scheme of our modem divines, who hold that faith justifies only as an act or expression of obedience. Whereas, in truth, obedience has no concern in justification, any otherwise than as an expression of faith.

I now proceed to the

IV. Thing proposed, *viz*. To answer objections.

Object. 1. We frequently find promises of eternal life and salvation, and sometimes of justification itself, made to our own virtue and obedience. Eternal life is promised to obedience, in Rom. 2:7, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life:" And the like in innumerable other places. And justification itself is promised to that virtue of a forgiving spirit or temper in us, Mat. 6:14, "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." All allow that justification in great part consists in the forgiveness of sins.

To this I answer,

1. These things being promised to our virtue and obedience, argues no more, than that there is a connection between them and evangelical obedience, which, I have already observed, is not the thing in dispute. All that can be proved by obedience and salvation being connected in the promise, is that obedience and salvation are connected in fact, which nobody denies, and whether it be owned or denied, is, as has been shown, nothing to the purpose. There is no need that an admission to a title to salvation should be given on the account of our obedience, in order to the promises being true. If we find such a promise, that he that obeys shall be saved, or he that is holy shall be justified, all that is needful, in order to such promises being true, is that it be really so: that he that obeys shall be saved, and that holiness and justification shall indeed go together. That proposition may be a truth, that he that obeys shall be saved, because obedience and salvation are connected together in fact, and yet an acceptance to a title to salvation not be granted upon the account of any

of our own virtue or obedience. What is a promise, but only a declaration of future truth, for the comfort and encouragement of the person to whom it is declared? Promises are conditional propositions, and, as has been already observed, it is not the thing in dispute, whether other things besides faith may not have the place of the condition in such propositions wherein pardon and salvation are the consequent.

2. Promises may rationally be made to signs and evidences of faith, and yet the thing promised not be upon the account of the sign, but the thing signified. Thus, for instance, human government may rationally make promises of such and such privileges to those that can show such evidences of their being free of such a city, or members of such a corporation, or descended of such a family, when it is not at all for the sake of that which is the evidence or sign, in itself considered, that they are admitted to such a privilege, but only and purely for the sake of that which it is an evidence of. And though God does not stand in need of signs to know whether we have true faith or not, yet our own consciences do, so that it is much for our comfort that promises are made to signs of faith. Finding in ourselves a forgiving temper and disposition, may be a most proper and natural evidence to our consciences, that our hearts have, in a sense of our own utter unworthiness, truly closed and fallen in with the way of free and infinitely gracious forgiveness of our sins by Jesus Christ, whence we may be enabled, with the greater comfort, to apply to ourselves the promises of forgiveness by Christ.

3. It has been just now shown, how that acts of evangelical obedience are indeed concerned in our justification itself, and are not excluded from that condition that justification depends upon, without the least prejudice to that doctrine of justification by faith, without any goodness of our own, that has been maintained. Therefore it can be no objection against this doctrine, that we have sometimes in Scripture promises of pardon and acceptance made to such acts of obedience.

4. Promises of particular benefits implied in justification and salvation, may especially be fitly made to such expressions and evidences of faith as they have a peculiar natural likeness and suitableness to. As forgiveness is promised to a forgiving spirit in us, obtaining mercy is fitly promised to mercifulness in us, and the like, and that upon several accounts, they are

the most natural evidences of our heart's closing with those benefits by faith. For they do especially show the sweet accord and consent that there is between the heart and these benefits, and by reason of the natural likeness that there is between the virtue and the benefit, the one has the greater tendency to bring the other to mind. The practice of the virtue tends the more to renew the sense, and refresh the hope of the blessing promised, and also to convince the conscience of the justice of being denied the benefit, if the duty be neglected. Besides the sense and manifestation of divine forgiveness in our own consciences — yea, and many exercises of God's forgiving mercy (as it respects God's fatherly displeasure), granted after justification, through the course of a Christian's life — may be given as the proper rewards of a forgiving spirit, and yet this not be at all to the prejudice of the doctrine we have maintained, as will more fully appear, when we come to answer another objection hereafter to be mentioned.

Object. 2. Our own obedience, and inherent holiness, is necessary to prepare men for heaven, and therefore is doubtless what recommends persons to God's acceptance, as the heirs of heaven.

To this I answer,

1. Our own obedience being necessary, in order to a preparation for an actual bestowment of glory, is no argument that it is the thing upon the account of which we are accepted to a right to it. God may, and does do many things to prepare the saints for glory, after he has accepted them as the heirs of glory. A parent may do much to prepare a child for an inheritance in its education, after the child is an heir. Yea, there are many things necessary to fit a child for the actual possession of the inheritance, yet not necessary in order to its having a right to the inheritance.

2. If everything that is necessary to prepare men for glory must be the proper condition of justification, then perfect holiness is the condition of justification. Men must be made perfectly holy, before they are admitted to the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven, for there must in no wise enter in there any spiritual defilement. And therefore, when a saint dies, he leaves all his sin and corruption when he leaves the body.

Object. 3. Our obedience is not only indissolubly connected with salvation, and preparatory to it, but the Scripture expressly speaks of bestowing eternal blessings as rewards for the good deeds of the saints. Mat. 10:42, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward." 1 Cor 3:8, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." And in many other places. This seems to militate against the doctrine that has been maintained, two ways: (1.) The bestowing a reward, carries in it a respect to a moral fitness in the thing rewarded to the reward. The very notion of a reward being a benefit bestowed in testimony of acceptance of, and respect to, the goodness or amiableness of some qualification or work in the person rewarded. Besides, the Scripture seems to explain itself in this matter, in Rev. 3:4, "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." This is here given as the reason why they should have such a reward, "because they were worthy;" which, though we suppose it to imply no proper merit, yet it at least implies a moral fitness, or that the excellency of their virtue in God's sight recommends them to such a reward, which seems directly repugnant to what has been supposed, *viz.* that we are accepted, and approved of God, as the heirs of salvation, not out of regard to the excellency of our own virtue or goodness, or any moral fitness therein to such a reward, but only on account of the dignity and moral fitness of Christ's righteousness. (2.) Our being eternally rewarded for our own holiness and good works, necessarily supposes that our future happiness will be greater or smaller, in some proportion as our own holiness and obedience is more or less, and that there are different degrees of glory, according to different degrees of virtue and good works, is a doctrine very expressly and frequently taught us in Scripture. But this seems quite inconsistent with the saints all having their future blessedness as a reward of Christ's righteousness. For if Christ's righteousness be imputed to all, and this be what entitles each one to glory, then it is the same righteousness that entitles one to glory which entitles another. But if all have glory as the reward of the same righteousness, why have not all the same glory? Does not the same righteousness merit as much glory when imputed to one as when imputed to another?

In answer to the *first* part of this objection, I would observe, that it does not argue that we are justified by our good deeds, that we shall have eternal blessings in reward for them. For it is in consequence of our justification, that our good deeds become rewardable with spiritual and eternal rewards. The acceptableness, and so the rewardableness, of our virtue, is not antecedent to justification, but follows it, and is built entirely upon it, which is the reverse of what those in the adverse scheme of justification suppose, *viz.* that justification is built on the acceptableness and rewardableness of our virtue. They suppose that a saving interest in Christ is given as a reward of our virtue, or (which is the same thing), as a testimony of God's acceptance of our excellency in our virtue. But the contrary is true: that God's respect to our virtue as our amiableness in his sight, and his acceptance of it as rewardable, is entirely built on our interest in Christ already established. So that the relation to Christ, whereby believers in scripture language are said to be in Christ, is the very foundation of our virtues and good deeds being accepted of God, and so their being rewarded. For a reward is a testimony of acceptance. For we, and all that we do, are accepted only in the beloved, Eph. 1:6. Our sacrifices are acceptable, only through our interest in him, and through his worthiness and preciousness being, as it were, made ours. 1 Pet. 2:4, 5, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here being actually built on this stone, precious to God, is mentioned as all the ground of the acceptableness of our good works to God, and their becoming also precious in his eyes. So, Heb. 13:21, "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." And hence we are directed, whatever we offer to God, to offer it in Christ's name, as expecting to have it accepted no other way, than from the value that God has to that name. Col. 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." To act in Christ's name, is to act under him as our head, and as having him to stand for us, and represent us to God-ward.

The reason of this may be seen from what has been already said, to show

it is not meet that anything in us should be accepted of God as any excellency of our persons, until we are actually in Christ, and justified through him. The loveliness of the virtue of fallen creatures is nothing in the sight of God, till he beholds them in Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. 1. Because till then we stand condemned before God, by his own holy law, to his utter rejection and abhorrence. And, 2. Because we are infinitely guilty before him, and the loveliness of our virtue bears no proportion to our guilt, and must therefore pass for nothing before a strict judge. And, 3. Because our good deeds and virtuous acts themselves are in a sense corrupt, and the hatefulness of the corruption of them, if we are beheld as we are in ourselves, or separate from Christ, infinitely outweighs the loveliness of the good that is in them. So that if no other sin was considered but only that which attends the act of virtue itself, the loveliness vanishes into nothing in comparison of it, and therefore the virtue must pass for nothing, out of Christ. Not only are our best duties defiled, in being attended with the exercises of sin and corruption which precede, follow, and are intermingled with them, but even the holy acts themselves, and the gracious exercises of the godly, are defective. Though the act most simply considered is good, yet take the acts in their measure and dimensions, and the manner in which they are exerted, and they are sinfully defective: there is that defect in them that may well be called the corruption of them. That defect is properly sin, an expression of a vile sinfulness of heart and what tends to provoke the just anger of God, not because the exercises of love and other grace is not equal to God's loveliness. For it is impossible the love of creatures (men or angels) should be so, but because the act is so very disproportionate to the occasion given for love or other grace, considering God's loveliness, the manifestation that is made of it, the exercises of kindness, the capacity of human nature, and our advantages (and the like) together. — A negative expression of corruption may be as truly sin, and as just cause of provocation, as a positive. Thus if a worthy and excellent person should, from mere generosity and goodness, exceedingly lay out himself, and with great expense and suffering save another's life, or redeem him from some extreme calamity, and if that other person should never thank him for it, or express the least gratitude any way, this would be a negative expression of his ingratitude and baseness. But [it] is equivalent to an act of ingratitude, or positive exercise of a base unworthy spirit, and is truly

an expression of it, and brings as much blame as if he by some positive act had much injured another person. And so it would be (only in a lesser degree) if the gratitude was but very small, bearing no proportion to the benefit obligation. As if, for so great and extraordinary a kindness, he should express no more gratitude than would have been becoming towards a person who had only given him a cup of water when thirsty, or shown him the way in a journey when at a loss, or had done him some such small kindness. If he should come to his benefactor to express his gratitude, and should do after this manner, he might truly be said to act unworthily and odiously, he would show a most ungrateful spirit. His doing after such a manner might justly be abhorred by all, and yet the gratitude, that little there is of it, most simply considered, and so far as it goes, is good. And so it is with respect to our exercise of love, and gratitude, and other graces, towards God. They are defectively corrupt and sinful, and take them as they are, in their manner and measure, might justly be odious and provoking to God, and would necessarily be so, were we beheld out of Christ. For in that this defect is sin, it is infinitely hateful, and so the hatefulness of the very act infinitely outweighs the loveliness of it, because all sin has infinite hatefulness and heinousness. But our holiness has but little value and loveliness, as has been elsewhere demonstrated.

Hence, though it be true that the saints are rewarded for their good works, yet it is for Christ's sake only, and not for the excellency of their works in themselves considered, or beheld separately from Christ. For so they have no excellency in God's sight, or acceptableness to him, as has now been shown. It is acknowledged that God, in rewarding the holiness and good works of believers, does in some respect give them happiness as a testimony of his respect to the loveliness of their holiness and good works in his sight. For that is the very notion of a reward. But it is in a very different sense from what would have been if man had not fallen, which would have been to bestow eternal life on man, as a testimony of God's respect to the loveliness of what man did, considered as in itself, and as in man separately by himself, and not beheld as a member of Christ. In which sense also, the scheme of justification we are opposing necessarily supposes the excellency of our virtue to be respected and rewarded. For it supposes a saving interest in Christ itself to be given as a

reward of it.

Two things come to pass, relating to the saints' reward for their inherent righteousness, by virtue of their relation to Christ. 1. The guilt of their persons is all done away, and the pollution and hatefulness that attends and is in their good works, is hid. 2. Their relation to Christ adds a positive value and dignity to their good works in God's sight. That little holiness, and those faint and feeble acts of love, and other grace, receive and exceeding value in the sight of God, by virtue of God's beholding them as in Christ, and as it were members of one so infinitely worthy in his eyes, and that because God looks upon the persons as of greater dignity on this account. Isa. 43:4, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou has been honorable." God, for Christ's sake, and because they are members of his own righteous and dear Son, sets an exceeding value upon their persons. Hence it follows, that he also sets a great value upon their good acts and offerings. The same love and obedience in a person of greater dignity and value in God's sight, is more valuable in his eyes than in one of less dignity. Love is valuable in proportion to the dignity of the person whose love it is, because so far as anyone gives his love to another, he gives himself, in that he gives his heart. But this is a more excellent offering, in proportion as the person whose self is offered is more worthy. Believers are become immensely more honorable in God's esteem by virtue of their relation to Christ, than man would have been considered as by himself, though he had been free from sin: as a mean person becomes more honorable when married to a king. Hence God will probably reward the little weak love, and poor and exceeding imperfect obedience of believers in Christ, with more glorious reward than he would have done Adam's perfect obedience. According to the tenor of the first covenant, the person was to be accepted and rewarded, only for the work's sake. But by the covenant of grace, the work is accepted and rewarded, only for the person's sake: the person being beheld antecedently as a member of Christ, and clothed with his righteousness. So that though the saints' inherent holiness is rewarded, yet this very reward is indeed not the less founded on the worthiness and righteousness of Christ. None of the value that their works have in his sight, nor any of the acceptance they have with him, is out of Christ, and out of his righteousness. But his worthiness as mediator is the prime and only foundation on which all is

built, and the universal source whence all arises. God indeed does great things out of regard to the saints' loveliness, but it is only as a secondary and derivative loveliness. When I speak of a derivative loveliness, I do not mean only, that the qualifications themselves accepted as lovely, are derived from Christ, from his power and purchase, but that the acceptance of them as a loveliness, and all the value that is set upon them, and all their connection with the reward, is founded in, and derived from, Christ's righteousness and worthiness.

If we suppose that not only higher degrees of glory in heaven, but heaven itself, is in some respect given in reward for the holiness and good works of the saints, in this secondary and derivative sense, it will not prejudice the doctrine we have maintained. It is no way impossible that God may bestow heavens' glory wholly out of respect to Christ's righteousness, and yet in reward for man's inherent holiness, in different respects, and different ways. It may be only Christ's righteousness that God has respect to, for its own sake, the independent acceptableness and dignity of it being sufficient of itself to recommend all that believe in Christ to a title to this glory. So it may be only by this that persons enter into a title to heaven, or have their prime right to it. Yet God may also have respect to the saints' own holiness, for Christ's sake, and as deriving a value from Christ's merit, which he may testify in bestowing heaven upon them. The saints being beheld as members of Christ, their obedience is looked upon by God as something of Christ's: it being the obedience of the members of Christ, as the sufferings of the members of Christ are looked upon, in some respect, as the sufferings of Christ. Hence the apostle, speaking of his sufferings, says, Col. 1:24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." To the same purpose is Mat. 25:35, etc. I was hungry, naked, sick, and in prison, etc. And so that in Rev. 11:8 "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

By the merit and righteousness of Christ, such favor of God towards the believer may be obtained, as that God may hereby be already, as it were, disposed to make them perfectly and eternally happy. But yet this does not hinder, but that God in his wisdom may choose to bestow this perfect

and eternal happiness in this way, *viz.* in some respect as a reward of their holiness and obedience. It is not impossible but that the blessedness may be bestowed as a reward for that which is done after that an interest is already obtained in that favor, which (to speak of God after the manner of men) disposes God to bestow the blessedness. Our heavenly Father may already have that favor for a child, whereby he may be thoroughly ready to give the child an inheritance, because he is his child, which he is by the purchase of Christ's righteousness, and yet that the Father may choose to bestow the inheritance on the child in a way of reward for his dutifulness, and behaving in a manner becoming a child. And so great a reward may not be judged more than a meet reward for his dutifulness, but that so great a reward is judged meet, does not arise from the excellency of the obedience absolutely considered, but from his standing in so near and honorable a relation to God, as that of a child, which is obtained only by the righteousness of Christ. And thus the reward, and the greatness of it, arises properly from the righteousness of Christ, though it be indeed in some sort the reward of their obedience. As a father might justly esteem the inheritance no more than a meet reward for the obedience of his child, and yet esteem it more than a meet reward for the obedience of a servant. The favor whence a believer's heavenly Father bestows the eternal inheritance, and his title as an heir, is founded in that relation he stands in to him as a child, purchased by Christ's righteousness: though he in wisdom chooses to bestow it in such a way, and therein to testify his acceptance of the amiableness of his obedience in Christ.

Believers having a title to heaven by faith antecedent to their obedience, or its being absolutely promised to them before, does not hinder but that the actual bestowment of heaven may also be a testimony of God's regard to their obedience, though performed afterwards. Thus it was with Abraham, the father and pattern of all believers. God bestowed upon him that blessing of multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven, and causing that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, in reward for his obedience in offering up his son Isaac, Gen. 22:16, 17, 18, "And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of

heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and they seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." And yet the very same blessings had been from time to time promised to Abraham, in the most positive terms, and the promise, with great solemnity, confirmed and sealed to him, as Gen. 12:2, 3; chap. 13:16; chap. 15:1, 4-7, etc. Gen. 17 throughout; chap. 18:10, 18.

From what has been said we may easily solve the difficulty arising from that text in Rev. 3:4, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;" which is parallel with that text in Luke 20:35, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." I allow (as in the objection) that this worthiness does doubtless denote a moral fitness to the reward, or that God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons and performances have in his sight.

1. God looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of his regard to the value which their persons have in his sight. But he sets this value upon their persons purely for Christ's sake. They are such jewels, and have such preciousness in his eyes, only because they are beheld in Christ, and by reason of the worthiness of the head they are the members of, and the stock they are grafted into. And the value that God sets upon them on this account is so great, that God thinks meet, from regard to it, to admit them to such exceeding glory. The saints, on account of their relation to Christ, are such precious jewels in God's sight, that they are thought worthy of a place in his own crown. Mal. 3:17; Zec. 9:16. So far as the saints are said to be valuable in God's sight, on whatever account, so far may they properly be said to be worthy, or meet for that honor which is answerable to the value or price which God sets upon them. A child or wife of a prince is worthy to be treated with great honor. Therefore if a mean person should be adopted to be a child of a prince, or should be espoused to a prince, it would be proper to say, that she was worthy of such and such honor and respect. There would be no force upon the words in saying that she ought to have such respect paid her, for she is worthy, though it be only on account of her relation to the prince that she is so.

2. From the value God sets upon their persons, for the sake of Christ's worthiness, he also sets a high value on their virtue and performances. Their meek and quiet spirit is of great price in his sight. Their fruits are pleasant fruits, their offerings are an odor of sweet smell to him, and that because of the value he sets on their persons, as has been already observed and explained. This preciousness or high valuableness of believers is a moral fitness to a reward. Yet this valuableness is all in the righteousness of Christ, that is the foundation of it. The thing respected is not excellency in them separately by themselves, or in their virtue by itself, but the value in God's account arises from other considerations, which is the natural import of Luke 20:35, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world," etc. and Luke 21:36, "That ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." 2 Thes. 1:5, "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."

There is a vast difference between this scheme, and what is supposed in the scheme of those that oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This lays the foundation of first acceptance with God, and all actual salvation consequent upon it, wholly in Christ and his righteousness. On the contrary, in their scheme, a regard to man's own excellency or virtue is supposed to be first, and to have the place of the first foundation in actual salvation, though not in that ineffectual redemption, which they suppose common to all. They lay the foundation of all discriminating salvation in man's own virtue and moral excellency. This is the very bottom stone in this affair, for they suppose that it is from regard to our virtue, that even a special interest in Christ itself is given. The foundation being thus contrary, the whole scheme becomes exceeding diverse and contrary. The one is an evangelical scheme, the other a legal one. The one is utterly inconsistent with our being justified by Christ's righteousness, the other not at all.

From what has been said, we may understand, not only how the forgiveness of sin granted in justification is indissolubly connected with a forgiving spirit in us, but how there may be many exercises of forgiving mercy granted in reward for our forgiving those who trespass against us. For none will deny but that there are many acts of divine forgiveness

towards the saints, that do not presuppose an unjustified state immediately preceding that forgiveness. None will deny, that saints who never fell from a justified state, yet commit many sins which God forgives afterwards, by laying aside his fatherly displeasure. This forgiveness may be in reward for our forgiveness, without any prejudice to the doctrine that has been maintained, as well as other mercies and blessings consequent on justification.

With respect to the *second* part of the objection, that relates to the different degrees of glory, and the seeming inconsistency there is in it, that the degrees of glory in different saints should be greater or lesser according to their inherent holiness and good works, and yet, that everyone's glory should be purchased with the price of the very same imputed righteousness, — I answer that Christ, by his righteousness, purchased for everyone complete and perfect happiness, according to his capacity. But this does not hinder but that the saints, being of various capacities, may have various degrees of happiness, and yet all their happiness be the fruit of Christ's purchase. Indeed it cannot be properly said, that Christ purchased any particular degree of happiness, so that the value of Christ's righteousness in the sight of God, is sufficient to raise a believer so high in happiness, and no higher, and so that if the believer were made happier, it would exceed the value of Christ's righteousness. But in general, Christ purchased eternal life, or perfect happiness for all, according to their several capacities. The saints are as so many vessels of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full: this Christ purchased for all. But after all, it is left to God's sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel. Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter. Eph 4:4, 5, 6, 7, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," etc. — "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." God may dispense in this matter according to what rule he pleases, not the less for what Christ has done: he may dispense either without condition, or upon what condition he pleases to fix. It is evident that Christ's righteousness meddles not with this matter, for what Christ did was to fulfill the covenant of works, but the covenant of works did not meddle at all with this. If Adam had persevered in perfect obedience, he and his posterity would have had perfect and full

happiness. Everyone's happiness would have so answered his capacity, that he would have been completely blessed. But God would have been at liberty to have made some of one capacity, and other of another, as he pleased. — The angels have obtained eternal life, or a state of confirmed glory, by a covenant of works, whose condition was perfect obedience. But yet some are higher in glory than others, according to the several capacities that God, according to his sovereign pleasure, has given them. So that it being still left with God, notwithstanding the perfect obedience of the second Adam, to fix the degree of each one's capacity by what rule he pleases, he has been pleased to fix the degree of capacity, and so of glory, by the proportion of the saints' grace and fruitfulness here. He gives higher degrees of glory, in reward for higher degrees of holiness and good works, because it pleases him, and yet all the happiness of each saint is indeed the fruit of the purchase of Christ's obedience. If it had been but one man that Christ had obeyed and died for, and it had pleased God to make him a very large capacity, Christ's perfect obedience would have purchased that his capacity should be filled, and then all his happiness might properly be said to be the fruit of Christ's perfect obedience. Though, if he had been of a less capacity, he would not have had so much happiness by the same obedience, and yet would have had as much as Christ merited for him. Christ's righteousness meddles not with the degree of happiness, any otherwise than as he merits that it should be full and perfect, according to the capacity. So it may be said to be concerned in the degree of happiness, as perfect is a degree with respect to imperfect, but it meddles not with degrees of perfect happiness.

This matter may be yet better understood, if we consider that Christ and the whole church of saints are, as it were, one body, of which he is the Head, and they members, of different place and capacity. Now the whole body, head, and members, have communion in Christ's righteousness: they are all partakers of the benefit of it. Christ himself the Head is rewarded for it, and every member is partaker of the benefit and reward. But it does by no means follow, that every part should equally partake of the benefit, but every part in proportion to its place and capacity. The Head partakes of far more than other parts, and the more noble members partake of more than the inferior. As it is in a natural body that enjoys

perfect health, the head, and the heart, and lungs, have a greater share of this health. They have it more seated in them, than the hands and feet, because they are parts of greater capacity, though the hands and feet are as much in perfect health as those nobler parts of the body. So it is in the mystical body of Christ: all the members are partakers of the benefit of the Head, but it is according to the different capacity and place they have in the body. God determines that place and capacity as he pleases. He makes whom he pleases the foot, and whom he pleases the hand, and whom he pleases the lungs, etc. 1 Cor 12:18, "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." God efficaciously determines the place and capacity of every member, by the different degrees of grace and assistance in the improvement of it in this world. Those that he intends for the highest place in the body, he gives them most of his Spirit, the greatest share of the divine nature, the Spirit and nature of Christ Jesus the Head, and that assistance whereby they perform the most excellent works, and do most abound in them.

Object. 4. It may be objected against what has been supposed (*viz*. that rewards are given to our good works, only in consequence of an interest in Christ, or in testimony of God's respect to the excellency or value of them in his sight, as built on an interest in Christ's righteousness already obtained). That the Scripture speaks of an interest in Christ itself, as being given out of respect to our moral fitness. Mat. 10:37, 38, 39, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me: he that findeth his life, shall lose it," etc. Worthiness here at least signifies a moral fitness, or an excellency that recommends. And this place seems to intimate as though it were from respect to a moral fitness that men are admitted even to an union with Christ, and interest in him. Therefore this worthiness cannot be consequent on being in Christ, and by the imputation of his worthiness, or from any value that is in us, or in our actions in God's sight, as beheld in Christ.

To this I *answer*, that though persons when they are *accepted,* are not accepted as *worthy,* yet when they are *rejected,* they are rejected as *unworthy*. He that does not love Christ above other things, but treats him

with such indignity, as to set him below earthly things, shall be treated as unworthy of Christ. His unworthiness of Christ, especially in that particular, shall be marked against him, and imputed to him. And though he be a professing Christian, and live in the enjoyment of the gospel, and has been visibly ingrafted into Christ, and admitted as one of his disciples, as Judas was, yet he shall be thrust out in wrath, as a punishment of his vile treatment of Christ. The forementioned words do not imply that if a man does love Christ above father and mother, etc. that he would be *worthy*. The most they imply is that such a visible Christian shall be treated and thrust out as unworthy. He that believes is not received for the worthiness or moral fitness of faith, but yet the visible Christian is cast out by God, for the unworthiness and moral unfitness of unbelief. A being accepted as one of Christ's, is not the reward of believing, but being thrust out from being one of Christ's disciples, after a visible admission as such, is properly a punishment of unbelief. John 3:18,19, "He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Salvation is promised to faith as a free gift, but damnation is threatened to unbelief as a debt, or punishment due to unbelief. They who believed while in the wilderness, did not enter into Canaan, because of the worthiness of their faith. But God swore in his wrath, that they that believed not should not enter in, because of the unworthiness of their unbelief. Admitting a soul to an union with Christ is an act of free and sovereign grace, but excluding at death, and at the day of judgment, those professors of Christianity who have had the offers of a Savior, and enjoyed great privileges as God's people, is a judicial proceeding, and a just punishment of their unworthy treatment of Christ. The design of this saying of Christ is to make them sensible of the unworthiness of their treatment of Christ, who professed him to be their Lord and Savior, and set him below father and mother, etc. and not to show the worthiness of loving him above father and mother. If a beggar should be offered any great and precious gift, but as soon as offered, should trample it under his feet, it might be taken from him, as unworthy to have it. Or if a malefactor should have his pardon offered him, that he might be freed from execution, and should only scoff

at it, his pardon might be refused him, as unworthy of it. Though if he had received it, he would not have had it for his worthiness, or as being recommended to it by his virtue. For his being a malefactor supposes him unworthy, and its being offered him to have it only on accepting, supposes that the king looks for no worthiness, nothing in him for which he should bestow pardon as a reward. This may teach us how to understand Acts 13:46, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Object. 5. It is objected against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that repentance is evidently spoken of in Scripture as that which is in a special manner the condition of remission of sins: but remission of sins is by all allowed to be that wherein justification does (at least) in great part consist.

But it must certainly arise from a misunderstanding of what the Scripture says about repentance, to suppose that faith and repentance are two distinct things, that in like manner are the conditions of justification. For it is most plain from the Scripture, that the condition of justification, or that in us by which we are justified, is but one, and that isfaith. Faith and repentance are not two distinct conditions of justification, nor are they two distinct things that together make one condition of justification. But faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified, or by which we come to have an interest in Christ, and there is nothing else that has a parallel concern with it in the
affair of our salvation. And this the divines on the other side themselves are sensible of, and therefore they suppose that the faith the apostle Paul speaks of, which he says we are justified by alone, comprehends in it repentance.

And therefore, in answer to the objection, I would say that when repentance is spoken of in Scripture as the condition of pardon, thereby is not intended any particular grace, or act, properly distinct from faith, that has a parallel influence with it in the affair of our pardon or justification. But by repentance is intended nothing distinct from active conversion (or conversion actively considered), as it respects the term from which. Active conversion is a motion or exercise of the mind that respects two

terms, *viz.* sin and God, and by repentance is meant this conversion, or active change of the mind, so far as it is conversant about the term from which or about sin. This is what the word *repentance* properly signifies: *a change of the mind,* or, which is the same thing, the turning or the conversion of the mind. Repentance is this turning, as it respects what is turned from. Acts 26:19. — "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I showed unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the aaaaaGentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God." Both these are the same turning, but only with respect to opposite terms. In the former is expressed the exercise of mind about sin in this turning: in the other, the exercise of mind towards God.

If we look over the Scriptures that speak of evangelical repentance, we shall presently see that repentance is to be understood in this sense, as Mat. 9:13, "I am nota come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 13:3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And chap. 15:7, 10, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner
that repenteth," *i. e.* over one sinner that is converted. Acts 11:18, "Then hath God alsoto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." This is said by the Christians of the circumcision at Jerusalem, upon Peter's giving an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, and their embracing the gospel, though Peter had said nothing expressly about their sorrow for sin. And again, Acts 17:30, "But now commandeth all men every where to "repent." And Luke 16:30, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them frothe dead, they would repent." 2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is plain that in these and other places,
by repentance is meant conversion.

Now it is true, that conversion is the condition of pardon and justification. But if it be so, how absurd is it to say, that conversion is one condition of justification, and faith another, as though they were two distributively distinct and parallel conditions? Conversion is the condition of justification, because it is that great change by which we are brought from sin to Christ, and by which we become believers in him:

agreeable to Mat. 21:32, “And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” When we are directed to repent, that our sins may be blotted out, it is as much as to say, let your minds and hearts be changed, that your sins may be blotted out. But if it be said, let your hearts be changed, that you may be justified, and believe, that you may be justified, does it therefore follow, that the heart being changed is one condition ofjustification, and believing another? But our minds must be changed, that we may believe, and so may be justified.

And besides, evangelical repentance, being active conversion, is not to be treated of as a particular grace, properly and entirely distinct from faith, as by some it seems to have been. What is conversion, but the sinful, alienated soul’s closing with Christ, or th sinner’s being brought to believe in Christ? That exercise of soul in conversion that respects sin, cannot be excluded out of the nature of faith in Christ: there is something in faith, or closing with Christ, that respects sin, and that is evangelical repentance. That repentance which in Scripture is called, repentance for the remission of sins, is that very principle or operation of the mind itself that is called faith, so far as it is conversant about sin. Justifying faith in a Mediator is conversant about two things. It is conversant about sin or evil to be rejected and to be delivered from, and about positive good to be accepted and obtained by the Mediator. As conversant about the former of these, it is

evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins. Surely they must be veryignorant, or at least very inconsiderate, of the whole tenor of the gospel, who think that the repentance by which remission of sins is obtained, can be completed as to all that is essential to it, without any respect to Christ, or application of the mind to the Mediator, who alone has made atonement for sin. — Surely so great a part of salvation as remission of sins, is not to be obtained without looking or coming to the great and only Savior. It is true, repentance, in its more general abstracted nature, is only a sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it, which is a duty of natural religion. But evangelical repentance, for repentance for remission of sins, has more than this essential to it: a dependence of soul on the Mediator for deliverance from sin, is of the essence of it.

That justifying repentance has the nature of faith, seems evident by Acts

19:4, “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on ChristJesus.” The latter words, “saying unto the people, that they should believe on him,” etc.
are evidently exegetical of the former, and explain how he preached repentance for the remission of sins. When it is said, that he preached repentance for the remission of sin, saying that they should believe on Christ, it cannot be supposed but that his saying, that they should believe on Christ, was intended as directing them what to do that they might obtain the remission of sins. So 2 Tim. 2:25, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if Godperadventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” That acknowledging of the truth which there is in believing, is here spoken of as
what is retained in repentance. And on the other hand, that faith includes repentance in its nature, is evident by the apostle’s speaking of sin as destroyed in faith, Gal. 2:18. — In the preceding verses the apostle mentions an objection against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, *viz.* that it tends to encourage men in sin, and so to make Christ the minister of sin. This objection he rejects and refutes with this, “If I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” If sin be destroyed by faith, it must be by repentance of sin included in it. For we know that it is our repentance of sin, or the ìåôáïïéá, or turning of the mind from sin, that is our destroying our sin.

That in justifying faith which directly respects sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator, is as follows: a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment of its desert of the threatened punishment, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it and its punishment.

Concerning this, here described, three things may be noted: 1. That it is the very same with that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised in Scripture. 2. That it is of the essence of justifying faith, and is the same with that faith, so far as it is conversant about evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. 3. That this is indeed the proper and peculiar condition of remission of sins.

1. All of it is essential to evangelical repentance, and is indeed the very

thing meant by that repentance, to which remission of sins is promised in the gospel. As to the former part of the description, *viz.* a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment of its desert of wrath, none will deny it to be included in repentance. But this does not comprehend the whole essence of evangelical repentance. But what follows does also properly and essentially belong to its nature, looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it, and the punishment of it. That
repentance to which remission is promised, not only always has this with it, but it is contained in it, as what is of the proper nature and essence of it: and respect is ever had to this in the nature of repentance, whenever remission is promised to it. And it is especially from respect to this in the nature of repentance, that it has that promise made to it. If this latter part be missing, it fails of the nature of that evangelical repentance to which remission of sins is promised. If repentance remains in sorrow for sin, and does not reach to a looking to the free mercy of God in Christ for pardon, it is not that which is the condition of pardon, neither shall pardon be obtained by it. Evangelical repentance is an humiliation for sin before God. But the sinner never comes and humbles himself before God in any other repentance, but that which includes hoping in his mercy for remission. If sorrow be not accompanied with that, there will be no coming to God in it, but a flying further from him. There is some worship of God in justifying repentance, but that is not in any other repentance which has not a sense of and faith in the divine mercy to forgive sin, Psa. 130:4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." The promise of mercy to a true penitent, in Pro. 28:13 is expressed in these terms, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy." But there is faith in God's mercy in that confessing. The psalmist (Psalm 32) speaking of the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven — and whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputes not sin — says that while he kept silence his bones waxed old, but he
acknowledged his sin unto God: his iniquity he did not hide. He said he would confess his transgression to the Lord, and then God forgave the iniquity of his sin. The manner of expression plainly holds forth, that *then* he began to encourage himself in the mercy of God, but his bones waxed old while he kept silence. And therefore the apostle Paul, in the 4th of Romans, brings this instance, to confirm the doctrine of justification by

faith alone, that he had been insisting on. When sin is aright confessed to God, there is always faith in that act. That confessing of sin which is joined with despair, as in Judas, is not
the confession to which the promise is made. In Acts 2:38, the direction given to those who were pricked in their heart with a sense of the guilt of sin, was to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. Being baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, implied faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Repentance for the remission of sins was typified of old by the priest's confessing the sins of the people over the scapegoat, laying his hands on him, Lev. 16:21, denoting it is that repentance and confession of sin only that obtains remission, which is made over
Christ the great sacrifice, and with dependence on him. Many other things might be produced from the Scripture, that in like manner confirm this point, but these may be sufficient.

2. All the forementioned description is of the essence of justifying faith, and not different from it, so far as it is conversant about sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. For it is doubtless of the essence of justifying faith, to embrace Christ as a Savior from sin and its punishment, and all that is contained in that act is contained in the nature of faith itself. But in the act of embracing Christ as a Savior from our sin and its punishment, is implied a sense of our sinfulness, and a hatred for our sins, or a rejecting them with abhorrence, and a sense of our desert of punishment. Embracing Christ as a Savior from sin, implies the contrary act, *viz.* rejecting sin. If we fly to the light to be delivered from darkness, the same act is contrary to darkness, *viz.* a rejecting of it. In proportion to the earnestness with which we embrace Christ as a Savior from sin, in the same proportion is the abhorrence with which we reject sin, in the same act. Yea, suppose there be in the nature of faith, as conversant about sin, no more than the hearty embracing of Christ as a Savior from the punishment of sin, this act will imply in it the whole of the above-mentioned description. It implies a sense of our own sinfulness. Certainly in the hearty embracing of a Savior from the punishment of our sinfulness, there is the exercise of a sense that we are sinful. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Savior from the punishment of that which we are not sensible we are guilty of. There is

also in the same act, a sense of our desert of the threatened punishment. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Savior from that which we are not sensible that we have deserved. For if we are not sensible that we have deserved the punishment, we shall not be sensible that we have any need of a Savior from it, or, at least, shall not be convinced but that God who offers the Savior, unjustly makes him needful, and we cannot heartily embrace such an offer. And further, there is implied in a hearty embracing Christ as a Savior from punishment, not only a conviction of conscience, that we have deserved the punishment, such as the devils and damned have, but there is a hearty acknowledgment of it, with the submission of the soul, so as with the accord of the heart, to own that God might be just in the punishment. If the heart rises against the act or judgment of God, in holding us obliged to the punishment, when he offers us his Son as a Savior from the punishment, we cannot with the consent of the heart receive him in that character. But if persons thus submit to the righteousness of so dreadful a punishment of sin, this carries in it a hatred of sin.

That such a sense of our sinfulness, and utter unworthiness, and desert of punishment, belongs to the nature of saving faith, is what the Scripture from time to time holds forth, as particularly in Mat. 15:26-28. “But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table. Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith.” — And Luke 7:6-9. “The centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst
enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed: for I also am a man set under authority,” etc. — “When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” And also verse 37, 38. “And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash
his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and

kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Together with verse 50. "He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

These things do not necessarily suppose that repentance and faith are words of just the same signification. For it is only so much in justifying faith as respects the evil to be delivered from by the Savior, that is called repentance. Besides, both repentance and faith take them only in their general nature, [and] are entirely distinct. Repentance is a sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it, and faith is a trusting in God's sufficiency and truth. But faith and repentance, as *evangelical* duties, or justifying faith, and repentance for remission of sins, contain more in them, and imply a respect to a mediator, and involve
each other's nature: ***2*** though they still bear the name of faith and repentance, from those general moral virtues — that repentance, which is a duty of natural religion, and that faith, which was a duty required under the first covenant — that are contained in this evangelical act, which severally appear, when this act is considered with respect to its different terms and objects.

It may be objected here that the Scripture sometimes mentions faith and repentance together, as if they were entirely distinct things, as in Mark 1:15, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." But there is not need of understanding these as two distinct conditions of salvation, but the words are exegetical one of another. It is to teach us after what manner we must repent, *viz.* as believing the gospel, and after what manner we must believe the gospel, *viz.* as repenting. These words no more prove faith and repentance to be entirely distinct, than those fore-mentioned, Mat. 21:32. "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him." Or those, 2 Tim. 2:25. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The apostle, in Acts 19:4 seems to have reference to these words of John the Baptist, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe," etc. where the latter words, as we have already observed, are to explain how he preached repentance.

Another Scripture where faith and repentance are mentioned together, is Acts 20:21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,

repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." It may be objected, that in this place, faith and repentance are not only spoken of as distinct things, but having distinct objects.

To this I answer, that faith and repentance, in their general nature, are distinct things, and repentance for the remission of sins, or that in justifying faith that respects the evil to be delivered from, so far as it regards that term, which is what especially denominates it repentance, has respect to God as the object, because he is the Being offended by sin, and to be reconciled, but that in this justifying act, whence it is denominated faith, does more especially respect Christ. But let us interpret it how we will, the objection of faith being here so distinguished from repentance, is as much of an objection against the scheme of those that oppose justification by faith alone, as against this scheme. For they hold that the justifying faith the apostle Paul speaks of, includes repentance, as has been already observed.

3. This repentance that has been described, is indeed the special condition of remission of sins. This seems very evident by the Scripture, as particularly, Mark 1:4. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." So, Luke 3:3, "And be came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." Luke 24:47, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 2:38. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And, chap. 3:19. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The like is evident by Lev. 26:40-42; Job. 33:27, 28; Psa. 32:5; Pro. 28:13; Jer. 3:13. And 1 John 1:9 and other places.

And the reason may be plain from what has been said. We need not wonder that what in faith especially respects sin, should be especially the condition of remission of sins, or that this motion or exercise of the soul, as it rejects and flies from evil and embraces Christ as a Savior from it, should especially be the condition of being free from that evil: in like manner, as the same principle or motion, as it seeks good, and cleaves to

Christ as the procurer of that good, should be the condition of obtaining that good. Faith with respect to good is accepting and with respect to evil it is rejecting. Yea this rejecting evil is itself an act of acceptance. It is accepting freedom or separation from that evil, and this freedom or separation is the benefit bestowed in remission. No wonder that what in faith immediately respects this benefit, and is our acceptance of it, should be the special condition of our having it. It is so with respect to all the benefits that Christ has purchased. Trusting in God through Christ for such a particular benefit that we need, is the special condition of obtaining that benefit. When we need protection from enemies, the exercise of faith with respect to such a benefit, or trusting in Christ for protection from enemies, is especially the way to obtain that particular benefit, rather than trusting in Christ for something else, and so of any other benefit that might be mentioned. So prayer (which is the expression of faith) for a particular mercy needed, is especially the way to obtain that mercy. ***3*** — So that no argument can be drawn from hence against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And there is that in the nature of repentance, which peculiarly tends to establish the contrary of justification by works. For nothing so much renounces our own worthiness and excellency, as repentance. The very nature of it is to acknowledge our own utter sinfulness and unworthiness, and to renounce our own goodness and all confidence in self; and so to trust in the propitiation of the Mediator, and ascribe all the glory of forgiveness to him.

Object. 6. The last objection I shall mention, is that paragraph in the 3d chapter of James, where persons are said expressly to be justified by works: Jam. 2:21. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works?” Verse 24. “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” Verse 25. “Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?”

In answer to this objection, I would,

1. Take notice of the great unfairness of the divines that oppose us, in the improvement they make of this passage against us. All will allow, that in that proposition of St. James, “By works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” one of the terms, either the word *faith*, or else the word *justify*, is not to be understood precisely in the same sense as the same

terms when used by St. Paul, because they suppose, as well as we, that it was not the intent of the apostle James to contradict St. Paul in that doctrine of justification by faith alone, in which he had instructed the churches. But if we understand both the terms, as used by each apostle, in precisely the same sense, then what one asserts is a precise, direct, and full contradiction of the other: the one affirming and the other denying the very same thing. So that all the controversy from this text comes to this, *viz.* which of these two terms shall be understood in a diversity from St. Paul. They say that it is the word *faith*, for they suppose that when the apostle Paul uses the word, and makes faith that by which alone we are justified, that then by it is understood a compliance with and practice of Christianity in general, so as to include all saving Christian virtue and obedience. But as the apostle James uses the word faith in this place, they suppose thereby is to be understood only an assent of the understanding to the truth of gospel doctrines, as distinguished from good works, and that may exist separate from them, and from all saving grace. We, on the other hand, suppose that the word *justify* is to be understood in a different sense from the apostle Paul. So that they are forced to go as far in their scheme, in altering the sense of terms from Paul's use of them, as we. But yet at the same time that they freely vary the sense of the former of them, *viz.* faith, yet when we understand the latter, *viz.* justify, in a different sense from St. Paul, they exclaim against us. What necessity of framing this distinction, but only to serve an opinion? At this rate a man may maintain anything, though never so contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest text in the Bible! Though they do not show us why we have not as good warrant to understand the word *justify* in a diversity from St. Paul, as they the word *faith*. If the sense of one of the words must be varied on either scheme, to make the apostle James's doctrine consistent with the apostle Paul's, and if varying the sense of one term or the other be all that stands in the way of their agreeing with either scheme, and if varying the sense of the latter be in itself as fair as of the former, then the text lies as fair for one scheme as the other, and can no more fairly be an objection against our scheme than theirs. And if so, what becomes of all this great objection from this passage in James?

2. If there be no more difficulty in varying the sense of one of these terms than another, from anything in the text itself, so as to make the words

suit with either scheme, then certainly that is to be chosen that is most agreeable to the current of Scripture, and other places where the same matter is more particularly and fully treated of, and therefore that we should understand the word *justify* in this passage of James, in a sense in some respects diverse from that in which St. Paul uses it. For by what has been already said, it may appear, that there is no one doctrine in the whole Bible more fully asserted, explained, and urged, than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any of our own righteousness.

3. There is a very fair interpretation of this passage of St. James, no way inconsistent with this doctrine of justification, which I have shown that other scriptures abundantly teach, which the words themselves will as well allow of, as that which the objectors put upon them, and much better agrees with the context: and that is, that works are here spoken of as justifying as evidences. A man may be said to be justified by that which clears him, or vindicates him, or makes the goodness of his cause manifest. When a person has a cause tried in a civil court, and is justified or cleared, he may be said in different senses to be justified or cleared, by the goodness of his cause, and by the goodness of the evidences of it. He may be said to be cleared by what evidences his cause to be good, but not in the same sense as he is by that which makes his cause to be good. That which renders his cause good, is the proper ground of his justification. It is by that that he is himself a proper subject of it, but evidences justify, only as they manifest that his cause is good in fact, whether they are of such a nature as to have any influence to render it so or no. It is by works that our cause appears to be good, but by faith our cause not only appears to be good, but becomes good, because thereby we are united to Christ. That the word *justify* should be sometimes understood to signify the former of these, as well as the latter, is agreeable to the use of the word in common speech: as we say such an one stood up to justify another, *i.e.* he endeavored to show or manifest his cause to be good. — And it is certain that the word is sometimes used in this sense in Scripture, when speaking of our being justified before God: as where it is said, we shall be justified by our words, Mat. 12:37. “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” It cannot be meant that men are accepted before God on the account of their words. For God has told us nothing more plainly, than that it is the heart that he looks at, and that

when he acts as judge towards men, in order to justifying or condemning, he tries the heart, Jer. 11:20. “But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause.” Psa. 7:8, 9, “The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just; for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.” Verse 11, “God judgeth the righteous.” And many other places to the like purpose. And therefore men can be justified by their words, no otherwise than as evidences or manifestations of what is in the heart. And it is thus that Christ speaks of the words in this very place, as is evident by the context, Mat. 12:34, 35. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart,” etc. The words, or sounds themselves, are neither parts of godliness nor evidences of godliness, but as signs of what is inward.

God himself, when he acts towards men as judge, in order to a declarative judgment, makes use of evidences, and so judges men by their works. And therefore, at the day of judgment, God will judge men according to their works. For though God will stand in no need of evidence to inform him what is right, yet it is to be considered that he will then sit in judgment, not as earthly judges do, to find out what is right in a cause, but to declare and manifest what is right. And therefore that day is called by the apostle, “the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” Rom. 2:5.

To be justified, is to be approved of and accepted, but a man may be said to be approved and accepted in two respects: the one is to be approved really, and the other to be approved and accepted declaratively. Justification is twofold: it is either the acceptance and approbation of the judge itself, or the manifestation of that approbation by a sentence or judgment declared by the judge, either to our own consciences or to the world. If justification be understood in the former sense, for the approbation itself, that is only that by which we become fit to be approved. But if it be understood in the latter sense, for the manifestation of this approbation, it is by whatever is a proper evidence of that fitness. In the former, only faith is concerned, because it is by that only in us that

we become fit to be accepted and approved. In the latter, whatever is an evidence of our fitness, is alike concerned. And therefore, take justification in this sense, and then faith, and all other graces and good works, have a common and equal concern in it. For any other grace, or holy act, is equally an evidence of a qualification for acceptance or approbation, as faith.

To justify has always, in common speech, signified indifferently, either simply approbation, or testifying that approbation: sometimes one, and sometimes the other; because they are both the same, only as one is outwardly what the other is inwardly. So we, and it may be all nations, are wont to give the same name to two things, when one is only declarative of the other. Thus sometimes judging, intends only judging in our thoughts; at other times, testifying and declaring judgment. So such words as justify, condemn, accept, reject, prize, slight, approve, renounce, are sometimes put for mental acts, at other times, for an outward treatment. So in the sense in which the apostle James seems to use the word *justify* for *manifestative justification*, a man is justified not only by *faith*, but also by *works*: as a tree is manifested to be good, not only by immediately examining the tree, but also by the fruit, Pro. 20:11, "Even a child is known by his doing, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

The drift of the apostle does not require that he should be understood in any other sense; for all that he aims at, as appears by a view of the context, is to prove that good works are necessary. The error of those that he opposed was this: that good works were not necessary to salvation, that if they did but believe that there was but one God, and that Christ was the Son of God and the like, and were baptized, they were safe, let them live how they would, which doctrine greatly tended to licentiousness. The evincing the contrary of this is evidently the apostle's scope.

And that we should understand the apostle, of works justifying as an *evidence*, and in a declarative judgment, is what a due consideration of the context will naturally lead us to. — For it is plain, that the apostle is here insisting on works, in the quality of a necessary manifestation and evidence of faith, or as what the truth of faith is made to appear by: as Jam. 2:18, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my

faith by my works." And when he says, verse 26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It is much more rational and natural to understand him as speaking of works, as the proper signs and evidences of the reality, life, and goodness of faith. Not that the very works or actions done are properly the life of faith, as the spirit in the body, but it is the active, working nature of faith, of which the actions or works done are the signs, that is itself the life and spirit of faith. The sign of a thing is often in scripture language said to be that thing; as it is in that comparison by which the apostle illustrates it. Not the actions themselves of a body, are properly the life or spirit of the body, but the active nature, of which those actions or motions are the signs, is the life of the body. That which makes men pronounce anything to be alive is that they observe it has an active operative nature, which they observe no otherwise than by the actions or motions which are the signs of it. It is plainly the apostle's aim to prove, that if faith has not works, it is a sign that it is not a good sort of faith, which would not have been to his purpose if it was his design to show that it is not by faith alone, though of a right sort, that we have acceptance with God, but that we are accepted on the account of obedience as well as faith. It is evident, by the apostle's reasoning, that the necessity of works, is not from their having a parallel concern in our salvation with faith. But he speaks of works only as related to faith, and expressive of it, which, after all, leaves faith the alone fundamental condition, without anything else having a parallel concern with it in this affair; and other things conditions, only as several expressions and evidences of it.

That the apostle speaks of works justifying only as a sign, or evidence, and in God's declarative judgment, is further confirmed by Jam. 2:21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" Here the apostle seems plainly to refer to that declarative judgment of God concerning Abraham's sincerity, manifested to him, for the peace and assurance of his own conscience, after his offering up Isaac his son on the altar, Gen. 22:12, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." But here it is plain, and expressed in the very words of justification or approbation, that this work of Abraham offering up his son on the altar, justified him as an *evidence*. When the apostle James

says, we are justified by works, he may and ought to be understood in a sense agreeable to the instance he brings for the proof of it: but justification in that instance appears by the works of justification themselves, to be by works as an evidence. And where this instance of Abraham's obedience is elsewhere mentioned, in the New Testament, it is mentioned as a fruit and evidence of his faith. Heb. 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son."

And in the other instance which the apostle mentions, Jam. 2:25. "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" The apostle refers to a declarative judgment, in that particular testimony which was given of God's approbation of her as a believer, in directing Joshua to save her when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, Jos. 6:25, "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day: because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." This was accepted as an evidence and expression of her faith. Heb. 11:31, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." The apostle in saying, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?" by the manner of his speaking has reference to something in her history. But we have no account in her history of any other justification of her but this.

4. If, notwithstanding, any choose to take justification in St. James's precisely as we do in Paul's epistles, for God's acceptance or approbation itself, and not any expression of that approbation, what has been already said concerning the manner in which acts of evangelical obedience are concerned in the affair of our justification, affords a very easy, clear, and full answer. For if we take works as acts or expressions of faith, they are not excluded. So a man is not justified by faith only, but also by works; *i.e.* he is not justified only by faith as a principle in the heart, or in its first and more immanent acts, but also by the effective acts of it in life, which are the expressions of the life of faith, as the operations and actions of the body are of the life of that; agreeable to Jam. 2:26.

What has been said in answer to these objections, may also, I hope,

abundantly serve for an answer to another objection, often made against this doctrine, *viz.* that it encourages licentiousness in life. For, from what has been said, we may see that the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any manner of goodness or excellency of ours, does in no wise diminish either the necessity or benefit of a sincere evangelical universal *obedience*. Man's salvation is not only indissolubly connected with obedience, and damnation with the want of it, in those who have opportunity for it, but depends upon it in many respects. It is the way to salvation, and the necessary preparation for it. Eternal blessings are bestowed in reward for it, and our justification in our own consciences and at the day of judgment depends on it, as the proper evidence of our acceptable state; and that even in accepting of us as entitled to life in our justification, God has respect to this, as that on which the fitness of such an act of justification depends: so that our *salvation* does as truly depend upon it, as if we were justified for the moral excellency of it. And besides all this, the degree of our happiness to all eternity is suspended on, and determined by, the degree of this. So that this gospel-scheme of justification is as far from encouraging licentiousness, and contains as much to encourage and excite to strict and universal obedience, and the utmost possible eminency of holiness, as any scheme that can be devised, and indeed unspeakably more.

I come now to the

V. And last thing proposed, which is, to consider the "importance of this doctrine."

I know there are many that make as though this controversy was of no great importance: that it is chiefly a matter of nice speculation, depending on certain subtle distinctions, which many that make use of them do not understand themselves: that the difference is not of such consequence as to be worth being zealous about: and that more hurt is done by raising disputes about it than good.

Indeed I am far from thinking that it is of absolute necessity that persons should understand, and be agreed upon, all the distinctions needful

particularly to explain and defend this doctrine against all cavils and objections. Yet all Christians should strive after an increase of knowledge, and none should content themselves without some clear and distinct understanding in this point. But we should believe in the general, according to the clear and abundant revelations of God's word, that it is none of our own excellency, virtue, or righteousness, that is the *ground* of our being received from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance in God's sight, but only Jesus Christ, and his righteousness and worthiness, received by faith. This I think to be of great importance, at least in application to ourselves, and that for the following reasons.

First, the Scripture treats of this doctrine, as a doctrine of very great importance. That there is a certain doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to justification by the works of the law, which the Apostle Paul insists upon as of the greatest importance, none will deny, because there is nothing in the Bible more apparent. The apostle, under the infallible conduct of the Spirit of God, thought it worth his most strenuous and zealous disputing about and defending. He speaks of the contrary doctrine as fatal and ruinous to the souls of men, in the latter end of the ninth chapter of Romans, and beginning of the tenth. He speaks of it as subversive of the gospel of Christ, and calls it another gospel, and says concerning it: if anyone, "though an angel from heaven, preach it, let him be accursed;" Gal. 1:6-9 compared with the following part of the epistle. Certainly we must allow the apostles to be good judges of the importance and tendency of doctrines, at least the Holy Ghost in them. And doubtless we are safe, and in no danger of harshness and censoriousness, if we only follow him, and keep close to his express teachings, in what we believe and say of the hurtful and pernicious tendency of any error. Why are we to blame for saying what the Bible has taught us to say, or for believing what the Holy Ghost has taught us to that end that we might believe it?

Second, the adverse scheme lays another foundation of man's salvation than God has laid. I do not now speak of that ineffectual redemption that they suppose to be universal, and what all mankind are equally the subjects of. But I say, it lays entirely another foundation of man's actual, discriminating salvation, or that salvation, wherein true Christians differ from wicked men. We suppose the foundation of this to be Christ's

worthiness and righteousness. On the contrary, that scheme supposes it to be man's own virtue, even so, that this is the ground of a saving interest in Christ itself. It takes away Christ out of the place of the bottom stone, and puts in men's own virtue in the room of him, so that Christ himself in the affair of distinguishing, actual salvation, is laid upon this foundation. And the foundation being so different, I leave it to everyone to judge whether the difference between the two schemes consists only in punctilios of small consequence. The foundations being contrary, makes the whole scheme exceeding diverse and opposite: the one is a gospel scheme, the other a legal one.

Third, it is in this doctrine that the most essential difference lies between the covenant of grace and the first covenant. The adverse scheme of justification supposes that we are justified by our *works*, in the very same sense wherein man was to have been justified by his works under the first covenant. By that covenant our first parents were not to have had eternal life given them for any proper merit in their obedience, because their perfect obedience was a debt that they owed God. Nor was it to be bestowed for any proportion between the dignity of their obedience, and the value of the reward, but only it was to be bestowed from a regard to a moral fitness in the virtue of their obedience, to the reward of God's favor. A title to eternal life was to be given them, as a testimony of God's pleasedness with their works, or his regard to the inherent beauty of their virtue. And so it is the very same way that those in the adverse scheme suppose that we are received into God's special favor now, and to those saving benefits that are the testimonies of it. I am sensible the divines of that side entirely disclaim the popish doctrine of *merit*, and are free to speak of our utter unworthiness, and the great imperfection of all our services. But after all, it is our *virtue*, imperfect as it is, that recommends men to God, by which good men come to have a saving interest in Christ, and God's favor, rather than others. These things are bestowed in testimony of God's respect to their goodness. So that whether they will allow the term *merit* or no, yet they hold, that we are accepted by our own merit, in the same sense, though not in the same degree, as under the first covenant.

But the great and most distinguishing difference between that covenant

and the covenant of grace is, that by the covenant of grace we are not thus justified by our own works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. It is on this account chiefly that the new covenant deserves the name of a covenant of grace, as is evident by Rom. 4:16: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." And chap. 3:20, 24, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight… Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works; then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Gal. 5:4, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." And therefore the apostle, when in the same epistle to the Galatians, speaking of the doctrine of justification by works as another gospel, adds, "which is not another," Gal. 1:6, 7. It is no gospel at all: it is law. It is no covenant of grace, but of works. It is not an evangelical, but a legal doctrine. Certainly that doctrine wherein consists the greatest and most essential difference between the covenant of grace and the first covenant, must be a doctrine of great importance. That doctrine of the gospel by which above all others it is worthy of the name gospel, is doubtless a very important doctrine of the gospel.

Fourth, this is the main thing for which fallen men stood in need of divine revelation, to teach us how we who have sinned may come to be again accepted of God, or, which is the same thing, how the sinner may be justified. Something beyond the light of nature is necessary to salvation chiefly on this account. Mere natural reason afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this: it depending on the sovereign pleasure of the Being that we had offended by sin. This seems to be the great drift of that revelation which God has given, and of all those mysteries it reveals, all those great doctrines that are peculiarly doctrines of revelation, and above the light of nature. It seems to have been very much on this account, that it was requisite that the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be revealed to us. That by a discovery of the concern of the several divine persons in the great affair of our salvation, we might the better understand and see how all our dependence in this affair is on God, and our sufficiency all in him, and not in ourselves: that he is all in all in this business, agreeable to 1 Cor. 1:29-31, "That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto

us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." What is the gospel, but only the glad tidings of a new way of acceptance with God unto life, a way wherein sinners may come to be free from the guilt of sin, and obtain a title to eternal life? And if, when this way is revealed, it is rejected, and another of man's devising be put in the room of it, without doubt, it must be an error of great importance, and the apostle might well say it was another gospel.

Fifth, the contrary scheme of justification derogates much from the honor of God and the Mediator. I have already shown how it diminishes the glory of the Mediator, in ascribing that to man's virtue and goodness, which belongs alone to his worthiness and righteousness. By the apostle's sense of the matter it renders Christ needless, Gal. 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." If that scheme of justification be followed in its consequences, it utterly overthrows the glory of all the great things that have been contrived, and done, and suffered in the work of redemption. Gal. 2:21, "If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." It has also been already shown how it diminishes the glory of divine grace (which is the attribute God has especially set himself to glorify in the work of redemption), and so that it greatly diminishes the obligation to gratitude in the sinner that is saved. Yea, in the sense of the apostle, it makes void the distinguishing grace of the gospel, Gal. 5:4, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, are fallen from grace." It diminishes the glory of the grace of God and the Redeemer, and proportionably magnifies man. It makes the goodness and excellency of fallen man to be something, which I have shown are nothing. I have also already shown, that it is contrary to the truth of God in the threatening of his holy law, to justify the sinner for his virtue. And whether it were contrary to God's truth or no, it is a scheme of things very unworthy of God. It supposes that God, when about to lift up a poor, forlorn malefactor, condemned to eternal misery for sinning against his Majesty, and to make him unspeakably and eternally happy, by bestowing his Son and himself upon him, as it were, sets all this to sale, for the price of his virtue and excellency. I know that those we oppose acknowledge, that the price is very disproportionate to the benefit bestowed, and say, that God's grace is wonderfully manifested in accepting so little virtue,

and bestowing so glorious a reward for such imperfect righteousness. But seeing we are such infinitely sinful and abominable creatures in God's sight, and by our infinite guilt have brought ourselves into such wretched and deplorable circumstances — and all our righteousnesses are nothing, and ten thousand times worse than nothing (if God looks upon them as they be in themselves — is it not immensely more worthy of the infinite majesty and glory of God, to deliver and make happy such wretched vagabonds and captives, without any money or price of theirs, or any manner of expectation of any excellency or virtue in them, in any wise to recommend them? Will it not betray a foolish, exalting opinion of ourselves, and a mean one of God, to have thought of offering anything of ours, to recommend us to the favor of being brought from wallowing, like filthy swine, in the mire of our sins, and from the enmity and misery of devils in the lowest hell, to the state of God's dear children, in the everlasting arms of his love in heavenly glory, or to imagine that that is the constitution of God, that we should bring our filthy rags, and offer them to him as the *price* of this?

Sixth, the opposite scheme does most directly tend to lead men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, which is a thing fatal to the soul. This is what men are of themselves exceedingly prone to do (and that though they are never so much taught the contrary), through the partial and high thoughts they have of themselves, and their exceeding dullness of apprehending any such mystery as our being accepted for the righteousness of another. But this scheme does directly teach men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, in that it teaches them that this is indeed what they must be justified by, being the way of justification that God himself has appointed. So that if a man had naturally no disposition to trust in his own righteousness, yet if he embraced this scheme, and acted consistent with it, it would lead him to it. But that trusting in our own righteousness, is a thing fatal to the soul, is what the Scripture plainly teaches us. It tells us that it will cause that Christ shall profit us nothing, and be of no effect to us, Gal. 5:2-4. For though the apostle speaks there particularly of circumcision, yet it is not merely being circumcised, but trusting in circumcision as a righteousness, that the apostle has respect to. He could not mean that merely being circumcised would render Christ of no profit or effect to a

person, for we read that he himself, for certain reasons, took Timothy and circumcised him, Acts 16:3. And the same is evident by the context, and by the rest of the epistle. And the apostle speaks of trusting in their own righteousness as fatal to the Jews, Rom 9:31, 32, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone." Together with Rom. 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." And this spoken of as fatal to the Pharisees, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, which Christ spoke to them in order to reprove them for trusting in themselves that they were righteous. The design of the parable is to show them, that the very publicans shall be justified, rather than they, as appears by the reflection Christ makes upon it, Luke 18:14, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" that is, this and not the other. The fatal tendency of it might also be proved from its inconsistency with the nature of justifying faith, and with the nature of that humiliation that the Scripture often speaks of as absolutely necessary to salvation. But these Scriptures are so express, that it is needless to bring any further arguments.

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's Spirit may so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness — or how far they may believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application of it to themselves — or how far that error which they may have been led into by education, or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their practice — or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel doctrine of justification, that really do not, but only express themselves differently from others, or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions, or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main — or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a

precisely fixed and determinate meaning — or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine, for want of a distinct understanding of it: whose hearts, at the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it, and embrace it. How far these things may be, I will not determine, but am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances. Though it is manifest from what has been said, that the teaching and propagating contrary doctrines and schemes, is of a pernicious and fatal tendency.

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The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners

"That every mouth may be stopped." [Romans 3:19]

The main subject of the doctrinal part of this epistle, is the free grace of God in the salvation of men by Christ Jesus; especially as it appears in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And the more clearly to evince this doctrine, and show the reason of it, the apostle, in the first place, establishes that point, that no flesh living can be justified by the deeds of the law. And to prove it, he is very large and particular in showing, that all mankind, not only the Gentiles, but Jews, are under sin, and so under the condemnation of the law; which is what he insists upon from the beginning of the epistle to this place. He first begins with the Gentiles; and in the first chapter shows that they are under sin, by setting forth the exceeding corruptions and horrid wickedness that overspread the Gentile world: and then through the second chapter, and the former part of this third chapter, to the text and following verse, he shows the same of the Jews, that they also are in the same circumstances with the Gentiles in this regard. They had a high thought of themselves, because they were God's covenant people, and circumcised, and the children of Abraham. They despised the Gentiles as polluted, condemned, and accursed; but looked on themselves, on account of their external privileges, and ceremonial and moral righteousness, as a pure and holy people, and the children of God; as the apostle observes in the second chapter. It was therefore strange doctrine to them, that they also were unclean and guilty in God's sight, and under the condemnation and curse of the law. The apostle does therefore, on account of their strong prejudices against such doctrine, the more particularly insists upon it, and shows that they are no better than the Gentiles; and as in the 9th verse of this chapter, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." And, to convince them of it, he then produces certain passages out of their own law, or the

Old Testament, (to whose authority they pretend a great regard,) from the ninth verse to our text. And it may be observed, that the apostle, first, cites certain passages to prove that all mankind are corrupt, (verses 10-12.) "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." Secondly, the passages he cites next, are to prove, that not only all are corrupt, but each one wholly corrupt, as it were all over unclean, from the crown of the head to the soles of his feet; and therefore several particular parts of thebody are mentioned, the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet, (verses 13-15.) "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood." And, Thirdly, he quotes other passages to show, that each one is not only all over corrupt, but corrupt to a desperate degree, by affirming the most pernicious tendency of their wickedness; "Destruction and misery are in their ways." And then by denying all goodness or godliness in them; "And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." And then, lest the Jews should think these passages of their law do not concern them, and only the Gentiles are intended in them, the apostle shows in the text, not only that they are not exempt, but that they especially must be understood: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." By those that are under the law is meant the Jews; and the Gentiles by those that are without law; as appears by the 12th verse of the preceding chapter. There is a special reason to understand the law, as speaking to and of them, to whom it was immediately given. And therefore the Jews would be unreasonable in exempting themselves. And if we examine the places of the Old Testament whence these passages are taken, we shall see plainly that special respect is had to the wickedness of the people of that nation, in every one of them. So that the law shuts all up in universal and desperate wickedness, that every mouth may be stopped; the mouths of the Jews, as well as of the Gentiles, notwithstanding all those privileges by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles.

The things that the law says, are sufficient to stop the mouths

of all mankind, in two respects.

1. To stop them from boasting of their righteousness, as the Jews were wont to do; as the apostle observes in the 23rd verse of the preceding chapter.- That the apostle has respect to stopping their mouths in this respect, appears by the 27th verse of the context, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The law stops our mouths from making any plea for life, or the favor of God, or any positive good, from our own righteousness.

2. To stop them from making any excuse for ourselves, or objection against the execution of the sentence of the law, or the infliction of the punishment that it threatens. That it is intended, appears by the words immediately following, "That all the world may become guilty before God." That is, that they may appear to be guilty, and stand convicted before God, and justly liable to the condemnation of his law, as guilty of death, according to the Jewish way of speaking.

And thus the apostle proves, that no flesh can be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the law; as he draws the conclusion in the following verse; and so prepares the way for establishing of the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he proceeds to do in the following part of the chapter, and of the epistle.

DOCTRINE

"It is just with God eternally to cast off and destroy sinners."- For this is the punishment which the law condemns to- The truth of this doctrine may appear by the joint consideration of two things, viz. Man's sinfulness, and God's sovereignty.

I. It appears from the consideration of man's sinfulness. And that whether we consider the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin men are guilty of.

1. If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in general, it is not unjust in God to inflict what punishment is deserved; because the very notion of deserving any punishment is, that it may be justly inflicted.

A deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same thing. To say that one deserves such a punishment, and yet to say that he does not justly deserve it, is a contradiction; and if he justly deserves it, then it may be justly inflicted.

Every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If any fault deserves punishment, then so much the greater the fault, so much the greater is the punishment deserved. The faulty nature of any thing is the formal ground and reason of its desert of punishment; and therefore the more any thing hath of this nature, the more punishment it deserves. And therefore the terribleness of the degree of punishment, let it be never be so terrible, is no argument against the justice of it, if the proportion does but hold between the heinousness of the crime and the dreadfulness of the punishment; so that if there be any such thing as a fault infinitely heinous, it will follow that it is just to inflict a punishment for it that is infinitely dreadful.

A crime is more or less heinous, according as we are under greater or less obligations to the contrary. This is self-evident; because it is herein that the criminalness or faultiness of any thing consists, that it is contrary to what we are obliged or bound to, or what ought to be in us. So the faultiness of one being hating another, is in proportion to his obligation to love him. The crime of one being despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under greater or less obligations to honour him. The fault of disobeying another, is greater or less, as any one is under greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligations to love, and honour, and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty.

Our obligation to love, honour, and obey any being, is in proportion to his loveliness, honourableness, and authority; for that is the very meaning of the words. When we say any one is very lovely, it is the same as to say, that he is one very much to be loved. Or if we say such a one is more honourable than another, the meaning of the words is, that he is one that we are more obliged to honour. If we say any one has great authority over us, it is the same as to say, that he has great right to our subjection and

obedience.

But God is a being infinitely lovely, because he hath infinite excellency and beauty. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a being of infinite greatness, majesty, and glory; and therefore he is infinitely honourable. He is infinitely exalted above the greatest potentates of the earth, and highest angels in heaven; and therefore he is infinitely more honourable than they. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving of infinite punishment.-Nothing is more agreeable to the common sense of mankind, than that sins committed against any one, must be proportionably heinous to the dignity of the being offended and abused; as it is also agreeable to the word of God, I Samuel 2:25. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him;" (i.e. shall judge him, and inflict a finite punishment, such as finite judges can inflict;) "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" This was the aggravation of sin that made Joseph afraid of it. Genesis 39:9. "How shall I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was the aggravation of David's sin, in comparison of which he esteemed all others as nothing, because they were infinitely exceeded by it. Psalm 51:4. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned."-The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite: and it renders it no more than infinite; and therefore renders no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.

If there be any evil or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly infinite evil: for if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz. that it is against an infinite object. If it be ever so small upon other accounts, yet if it be any thing, it has one infinite dimension; and so is an infinite evil. Which may be illustrated by this: if we suppose a thing to have infinite length, but no breadth and thickness, (a mere mathematical line,) it is nothing: but if it have any breadth and thickness, though never so small, and infinite length, the quantity of it is infinite; it exceeds the quantity of any thing, however broad, thick, and long, wherein these

dimensions are all finite.

So that the objections made against the infinite punishment of sin, from the necessity, or rather previous certainty, of the futurition of sin, arising from the unavoidable original corruption of nature, if they argue any thing, argue against any faultiness at all: for if this necessity or certainty leaves any evil at all in sin, that fault must be infinite by reason of the infinite object.

But every such objector as would argue from hence, that there is no fault at all in sin, confutes himself, and shows his own insincerity in his objection. For at the same time that he objects, that men's acts are necessary, and that this kind of necessity is inconsistent with faultiness in the act, his own practice shows that he does not believe what he objects to be true: otherwise why does he at all blame men? Or why are such persons at all displeased with men, for abusive, injurious, and ungrateful acts towards them? Whatever they pretend, by this they show that indeed they do believe that there is no necessity in men's acts that is inconsistent with blame. And if their objection be this, that this previous certainty is by God's own ordering, and that where God orders an antecedent certainty of acts, he transfers all the fault from the actor on himself; their practice shows, that at the same time they do not believe this, but fully believe the contrary: for when they are abused by men, they are displeased with men, and not with God only.

The light of nature teaches all mankind, that when an injury is voluntary, it is faulty, without any consideration of what there might be previously to determine the futurition of that evil act of the will. And it really teaches this as much to those that object and cavil most as to others; as their universal practice shows. By which it appears, that such objections are insincere and perverse. Men will mention others' corrupt nature when they are injured, as a thing that aggravates their crime, and that wherein their faultiness partly consists. How common is it for persons, when they look on themselves greatly injured by another, to inveigh against him, and aggravate his baseness, by saying, "He is a man of a most perverse spirit: he is naturally of a selfish, niggardly, or proud and haughty temper: he is one of a base and vile disposition." And yet men's natural and corrupt dispositions are mentioned as an excuse for them, with

respect to their sins against God, as if they rendered them blameless.

2. That it is just with God eternally to cast off wicked men, may more abundantly appear, if we consider how much sin they are guilty of. From what has been already said, it appears, that if men were guilty of sin but in one particular, that is sufficient ground of their eternal rejection and condemnation. If they are sinners, that is enough. Merely this, might be sufficient to keep them from ever lifting up their heads, and cause them to smite on their breasts, with the publican that cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But sinful men are full of sin; full of principles and acts of sin: their guilt is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are totally corrupt, in every part, in all their faculties, and all the principles of their nature, their understandings, and wills; and in all their dispositions and affections. Their heads, their hearts, are totally depraved; all the members of their bodies are only instruments of sin; and all their senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, &c. are only inlets and outlets of sin, channels of corruption. There is nothing but sin, no good at all. Romans. 7:18. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." There is all manner of wickedness. There are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes. There are principles of all sorts of wickedness against men; and there is all wickedness against God. There is pride; there is enmity; there is contempt; there is quarreling; there is atheism; there is blasphemy. There are these things in exceeding strength; the heart is under the power of them, is sold under sin, and is a perfect slave to it. There is hard-heartedness, hardness greater than that of a rock, or an adamant-stone. There is obstinacy and perverseness, incorrigibleness and inflexibleness in sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or promises, by awakenings or encouragements, by judgments or mercies, neither by that which is terrifying nor that which is winning. The very blood of God our Saviour will not win the heart of a wicked man.

And there are actual wickednesses without number or measure. There are breaches of every command, in thought, word, and deed: a life full of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused and frowns despised; mercy and justice, and all the divine perfections, trampled on; and the honour of each person in the Trinity trod in the dirt. Now if one sinful

word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, that are guilty of so much sin!

II. If with man's sinfulness, we consider God's sovereignty, it may serve further to clear God's justice in the eternal rejection and condemnation of sinners, from men's cavils and objections. I shall not now pretend to determine precisely, what things are, and what things are not, proper acts and exercises of God's holy sovereignty; but only, that God's sovereignty extends to the following things.

1. That such is God's sovereign power and right, that he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning; but may in his providence permit and leave them to sin. He was not obliged to keep either angels or men from falling. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it impossible for him to sin, or break his law. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys all use of any commands, laws, promises, or threatenings, and the very notion of any moral government of God over those reasonable creatures. For to what purpose would it be, for God to give such and such laws, and declare his holy will to a creature, and annex promises and threatenings to move him to his duty, and make him careful to perform it, if the creature at the same time has this to think of, that God is obliged to make it impossible for him to break his laws? How can God's threatenings move to care or watchfulness, when, at the same time, God is obliged to render it impossible that he should be exposed to the threatenings? Or, to what purpose is it for God to give a law at all? For according to this supposition, it is God, and not the creature, that is under the law. It is the lawgiver's care, and not the subject's, to see that his law is obeyed; and this care is what the lawgiver is absolutely obliged to! If God be obliged never to permit a creature to fall, there is an end of all divine laws, or government, or authority of God over the creature; there can be no manner of use of these things.

God may permit sin, though the being of sin will certainly ensue on that permission: and so, by permission, he may dispose and order the event. If

there were any such thing as chance, or mere contingence, and the very notion of it did not carry a gross absurdity, (as might easily be shown that it does,) it would have been very unfit that God should have left it to mere chance, whether man should fall or no. For chance, if there should be any such thing, is undesigning and blind. And certainly it is more fit that an event of so great importance, and that is attended with such an infinite train of great consequences, should be disposed and ordered by infinite wisdom, than that it should be left to blind chance.

If it be said, that God need not have interposed to render it impossible for man to sin, and yet not leave it to mere contingence or blind chance neither; but might have left it with man's free will, to determine whether to sin or no: I answer, if God did leave it to man's free will, without any sort of disposal, or ordering [or rather, adequate cause] in the case, whence it should be previously certain how that free will should determine, then still that first determination of the will must be merely contingent or by chance. It could not have any antecedent act of the will to determine it; for I speak now of the very first act of motion of the will, respecting the affair that may be looked upon as the prime ground and highest source of the event. To suppose this to be determined by a foregoing act is a contradiction. God's disposing this determination of the will by his permission, does not at all infringe the liberty of the creature: it is in no respect any more inconsistent with liberty, than mere chance or contingence. For if the determination of the will be from blind, undesigning chance, it is no more from the agent himself, or from the will itself, than if we suppose, in the case, a wise, divine disposal by permission.

2. It was fit that it should be at the ordering of the divine wisdom and good pleasure, whether every particular man should stand for himself, or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed as the moral and federal head and representative of the rest. If God has not liberty in this matter to determine either of these two as he pleases, it must be because determining that the first father of men should represent the rest, and not that every one should stand for himself, is injurious to mankind. For if it be not injurious, how is it unjust? But it is not injurious to mankind; for there is nothing in the nature of the case itself, that makes it better that

each man should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father; as the least reflection or consideration will convince any one. And if there be nothing in the nature of the thing that makes the former better for mankind than the latter, then it will follow, that they are not hurt in God's choosing and appointing the latter, rather than the former; or, which is the same thing, that it is not injurious to mankind.

3. When men are fallen, and become sinful, God by his sovereignty has a right to determine about their redemption as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether he will redeem any or not. He might, if he had pleased, have left all to perish, or might have redeemed all. Or, he may redeem some, and leave others; and if he doth so, he may take whom he pleases, and leave whom he pleases. To suppose that all have forfeited his favor, and deserved to perish, and to suppose that he may not leave any one individual of them to perish, implies a contradiction; because it supposes that such a one has a claim to God's favor, and is not justly liable to perish; which is contrary to the supposition.

It is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure. By reason of his greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is worthy to be sovereign, and that his pleasure should in all things take place. He is worthy that he should make himself his end, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving account of any of his matters. It is fit that he who is absolutely perfect, and infinitely wise, and the Fountain of all wisdom, should determine every thing [that he effects] by his own will, even things of the greatest importance. It is meet that he should be thus sovereign, because he is the first being, the eternal being, whence all other beings are. He is the Creator of all things; and all are absolutely and universally dependent on him; and therefore it is meet that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth.

APPLICATION

In the improvement of this doctrine, I would chiefly direct myself to sinners who are afraid of damnation, in a use of conviction. This may be matter of conviction to you, that it would be just and righteous with God

eternally to reject and destroy you. This is what you are in danger of. You who are a Christless sinner are a poor condemned creature: God's wrath still abides upon you; and the sentence of condemnation lies upon you. You are in God's hands, and it is uncertain what he will do with you. You are afraid what will become of you. You are afraid that it will be your portion to suffer eternal burnings; and your fears are not without grounds; you have reason to tremble every moment. But be you never so much afraid of it, let eternal damnation be never so dreadful, yet it is just. God may nevertheless do it, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious. Though eternal damnation be what you cannot bear, and how much soever your heart shrinks at the thought of it, yet God's justice may be glorious in it. The dreadfulness of the thing on your part, and the greatness of your dread of it, do not render it the less righteous on God's part. If you think otherwise, it is a sign that you do not see yourself, that you are not sensible what sin is, nor how much of it you have been guilty of. Therefore for your conviction, be directed,

First, To look over your past life: inquire at the mouth of conscience, and hear what that has to testify concerning it. Consider what you are, what light you have had, and what means you have lived under: and yet how you have behaved yourself! What have those many days and nights you have lived been filled up with? How have those years that have rolled over your heads, one after another, been spent? What has the sun shone upon you for, from day to day, while you have improved his light to serve Satan by it? What has God kept your breath in your nostrils for, and given you meat and drink, that you have spent your life and strength, supported by them, in opposing God, and rebellion against him?

How many sorts of wickedness have you not been guilty of! How manifold have been the abominations of your life! What profaneness and contempt of God has been exercised by you! How little regard have you had to the Scriptures, to the word preached, to sabbaths, and sacraments! How profanely have you talked, many of you, about those things that are holy! After what manner have many of you kept God's holy day, not regarding the holiness of the time, not caring what you thought of in it! Yea, you have not only spent the time in worldly, vain, and unprofitable thoughts, but in immoral thoughts; pleasing yourself with the reflection

on past acts of wickedness, and in contriving new acts. Have not you spent much holy time in gratifying your lusts in your imaginations; yea, not only holy time, but the very time of God's public worship, when you have appeared in God's more immediate presence? How have you not only attended to the worship, but have in the mean time been feasting your lusts, and wallowing yourself in abominable uncleanness! How many sabbaths have you spent, one after another, in a most wretched manner! Some of you not only in worldly and wicked thoughts, but also a very wicked outward behavior! When you on sabbath-days have got along with your wicked companions, how has holy time been treated among you! What kind of conversation has there been! Yea, how have some of you, by a very indecent carriage, openly dishonored and cast contempt on the sacred services of God's house, and holy day! And what you have done some of you alone, what wicked practices there have been in secret, even in holy time, God and your own consciences know.

And how have you behaved yourself in the time of family prayer! And what a trade have many of you made of absenting yourselves from the worship of the families you belong to, for the sake of vain company! And how have you continued in the neglect of secret prayer! Therein wilfully living in a known sin, going abreast against as plain a command as any in the Bible! Have you not been one that has cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God?

What wicked carriage have some of you been guilty of towards your parents! How far have you been from paying that honour to them which God has required! Have you not even harboured ill-will and malice towards them? And when they have displeased you, have wished evil to them? yea, and shown your vile spirit in your behavior? and it is well if you have not mocked them behind their backs; and, like the cursed Ham and Canaan, as it were, derided your parents' nakedness instead of covering it, and hiding your eyes from it. Have not some of you often disobeyed your parents, yea, and refused to be subject to them? Is it not a wonder of mercy and forbearance, that the proverb has not before now been accomplished on you, Proverbs 30:17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

What revenge and malice have you been guilty of towards your neighbors! How have you indulged this spirit of the devil, hating others, and wishing evil to them, rejoicing when evil befell them, and grieving at others' prosperity, and lived in such a way for a long time! Have not some of you allowed a passionate furious spirit, and behaved yourselves in your anger more like wild beasts than like Christians?

What covetousness has been in many of you! Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and care about the things of it, that it has taken up your heart; you have allowed no room for God and religion; you have minded the world more than your eternal salvation. For the vanities of the world you have neglected reading, praying and meditation; for the things of the world, you have broken the sabbath: for the world you have spent a great deal of your time in quarreling. For the world you have envied and hated your neighbor; for the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven, behind your back; for the world you have sold your own soul. You have as it were drowned your soul in worldly cares and desires; you have been a mere earth-worm, that is never in its element but when grovelling and buried in the earth.

How much of a spirit of pride has appeared in you, which is in a peculiar manner the spirit and condemnation of the devil! How have some of you vaunted yourselves in your apparel! others in their riches! others in their knowledge and abilities! How has it galled you to see others above you! How much has it gone against the grain for you to give others their due honour! And how have you shown your pride by setting up your wills and in opposing others, and stirring up and promoting division, and a party spirit in public affairs.

How sensual have you been! Are there not some here that have debased themselves below the dignity of human nature, by wallowing in sensual filthiness, as swine in the mire, or as filthy vermin feeding with delight on rotten carrion? What intemperance have some of you been guilty of! How much of your precious time have you spent at the tavern, and in drinking companies, when you ought to have been at home seeking God and your salvation in your families and closets!

And what abominable lasciviousness have some of you been guilty of!

How have you indulged yourself from day to day, and from night to night, in all manner of unclean imaginations! Has not your soul been filled with them, till it has become a hold of foul spirits, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird? What foul-mouthed persons have some of you been, often in lewd and lascivious talk and unclean songs, wherein were things not fit to be spoken! And such company, where such conversation has been carried on, has been your delight. And with what unclean acts and practices have you defiled yourself! God and your own consciences know what abominable lasciviousness you have practised in things not fit to be named, when you have been alone; when you ought to have been reading, or meditating, or on your knees before God in secret prayer. And how have you corrupted others, as well as polluted yourselves! What vile uncleanness have you practised in company! What abominations have you been guilty of in the dark! Such as the apostle doubtless had respect to in Ephesians 5:12. "For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret." Some of you have corrupted others, and done what in you lay to undo their souls, (if you have not actually done it;) and by your vile practices and example have made room for Satan, invited his presence, and established his interest, in the town where you have lived.
What lying have some of you been guilty of, especially in your childhood! And have not your heart and lips often disagreed since you came to riper years? What fraud, and deceit, and unfaithfulness, have many of you practised in your own dealings with your neighbours, of which your own heart is conscious, if you have not been noted by others.

And how have some of you behaved yourselves in your family relations! How have you neglected your children's souls! And not only so, but have corrupted their minds by your bad examples; and instead of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have rather brought them up in the devil's service!

How have some of you attended that sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper without any manner of serious preparation, and in a careless slighty frame of spirits, and chiefly to comply with custom! Have you not ventured to put the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ into your mouth, while at the same time you lived in ways of known sins, and intended no other than still to go on in the same wicked practices? And, it

may be, have sat at the Lord's table with rancour in your heart against some of your brethren that you have sat there with. You have come even to that holy feast of love among God's children, with the leaven of malice and envy in your heart; and so have eaten and drank judgment to yourself.

What stupidity and sottishness has attended your course of wickedness: which has appeared in your obstinacy under awakening dispensations of God's word and providence. And how have some of you backslidden after you have set out in religion, and quenched God's Spirit after he had been striving with you! And what unsteadiness, and slothfulness, and long misimprovement of God's strivings with you, have you been chargeable with!

Now, can you think when you have thus behaved yourself, that God is obliged to show you mercy? Are you not after all this ashamed to talk of its being hard with God to cast you off? Does it become one who has lived such a life to open his mouth to excuse himself, to object against God's justice in his condemnation, or to complain of it as hard in God not to give him converting and pardoning grace, and make him his child, and bestow on him eternal life? Or to talk of his duties and great pains in religion, as if such performances were worthy to be accepted, and to draw God's heart to such a creature? If this has been your manner, does it not show how little you have considered yourself, and how little a sense you have had of your own sinfulness?

Secondly, Be directed to consider, if God should eternally reject and destroy you, what an agreeableness and exact mutual answerableness there would be between God so dealing with you, and your spirit and behaviour. There would not only be an equality, but a similitude. God declares, that his dealings with men shall be suitable to their disposition and practice. Psalm 18:25, 26. "With the merciful man, thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward." How much soever you dread damnation, and are affrighted and concerned at the thoughts of it; yet if God should indeed eternally damn you, you would be met with but in your own way; you would be dealt with exactly according to your own dealing. Surely it is

but fair that you should be made to buy in the same measure in which you sell.

Here I would particularly show,- 1. That if God should eternally destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of God. 2. That it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ. 3. That it would be agreeable to your behaviour towards your neighbours. 4. That it would be according to your own foolish behaviour towards yourself.

I. If God should for ever cast you off, it would be exactly agreeable to your treatment of him. That you may be sensible of this, consider,

1. You never have exercised the least degree of love to God; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him, if he should never express any love to you. When God converts and saves a sinner, it is a wonderful and unspeakable manifestation of divine love. When a poor lost soul is brought home to Christ, and has all his sins forgiven him, and is made a child of God, it will take up a whole eternity to express and declare the greatness of that love. And why should God be obliged to express such wonderful love to you, who never exercised the least degree of love to him in all your life? You never have loved God, who is infinitely glorious and lovely; and why then is God under obligation to love you, who are all over deformed and loathsome as a filthy worm, or rather a hateful viper? You have no benevolence in your heart towards God; you never rejoiced in God's happiness; if he had been miserable, and that had been possible, you would have liked it as well as if he were happy; you would not have cared how miserable he was, nor mourned for it, any more than you now do for the devil's being miserable. And why then should God be looked upon as obliged to take so much care for your happiness, as to do such great things for it, as he doth for those that are saved? Or why should God be called hard, in case he should not be careful to save you from misery? You care not what becomes of God's glory; you are not distressed how much soever his honour seems to suffer in the world: and why should God care any more for your welfare? Has it not been so, that if you could but promote your private interest, and gratify your own lusts, you cared not how much the glory of God suffered? And why may not God advance his own glory in the ruin of your welfare, not caring how much your

interest suffers by it? You never so much as stirred one step, sincerely making the glory of God your end, or acting from real respect to him: and why then is it hard if God doth not do such great things for you, as the changing of your nature, raising you from spiritual death to life, conquering the powers of darkness for you, translating you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, delivering you from eternal misery, and bestowing upon you eternal glory? You were not willing to deny yourself for God; you never cared to put yourself out of your way for Christ; whenever any thing cross or difficult came in your way, that the glory of God was concerned in, it has been your manner to shun it, and excuse yourself from it. You did not care to hurt yourself for Christ, whom you did not see worthy of it; and why then must it be looked upon as a hard and cruel thing, if Christ has not been pleased to spill his blood and be tormented to death for such a sinner.

2. You have slighted God; and why then may not God justly slight you? When sinners are sensible in some measure of their misery, they are ready to think it hard that God will take no notice of them; that he will see them in such a lamentable distressed condition, beholding their burdens and tears, and seem to slight it, and manifest no pity to them. Their souls they think are precious: it would be a dreadful thing if they should perish, and burn in hell for ever. They do not see through it, that God should make so light of their salvation. But then, ought they not to consider, that as their souls are precious, so is God's honour precious? The honour of the infinite God, the great King of heaven and earth, is a thing of as great importance, (and surely may justly be so esteemed by God,) as the happiness of you, a poor little worm. But yet you have slighted that honour of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet. You have been told that such and such things were contrary to the will of a holy God, and against his honour; but you cared not for that. God called upon you, and exhorted you to be more tender of his honour; but you went on without regarding him. Thus have you slighted God! And yet, is it hard that God should slight you? Are you more honourable than God, that he must be obliged to make much of you, how light soever you make of him and his glory?

And you have not only slighted God in time past, but you slight him still.

You indeed now make a pretence and show of honouring him in your prayers, and attendance on other external duties, and by sober countenance, and seeming devoutness in your words and behaviour; but it if all mere dissembling. That downcast look and seeming reverence, is not from any honour you have to God in your heart, though you would have God take it so. You who have not believed in Christ, have not the least jot of honour to God; that show of it is merely forced, and what you are driven to by fear, like those mentioned in Psalm 66:3. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves to thee." In the original it is, "shall lie unto thee;" that is, yield feigned submission, and dissemble respect and honour to thee. There is a rod held over you that makes you seem to pay such respect to God. This religion and devotion, even the very appearance of it, would soon be gone, and all vanish away, if that were removed. Sometimes it may be you weep in your prayers, and in your hearing sermons, and hope God will take notice of it, and take it for some honour; but he sees it to be all hypocrisy. You weep for yourself; you are afraid of hell; and do you think that is worthy of God to take much notice of you, because you can cry when you are in danger of being damned; when at the same time you indeed care nothing for God's honour.

Seeing you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little, wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing, and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the Majesty of heaven and earth?

3. Why should God be looked upon as obliged to bestow salvation upon you, when you have been so ungrateful for the mercies he has bestowed upon you already? God has tried you with a great deal of kindness, and he never has sincerely been thanked by you for any of it. God has watched over you, and preserved you, and provided for you, and followed you with mercy all your days; and yet you have continued sinning against him. He has given you food and raiment, but you have improved both in the service of sin. He has preserved you while you slept; but when you arose, it was to return to the old trade of sinning. God, notwithstanding this ingratitude, has still continued his mercy; but his kindness has never won your heart, or brought you to a more grateful behaviour towards him. It

may be you have received many remarkable mercies, recoveries from sickness, or preservations of your life when exposed by accidents, when if you had died, you would have gone directly to hell; but you never had any true thankfulness for any of these mercies. God has kept you out of hell, and continued your day of grace, and the offers of salvation, so long a time; while you did not regard your own salvation so much as in secret to ask God for it. And now God has greatly added to his mercy to you, by giving you the strivings of his Spirit, whereby a most precious opportunity for your salvation is in your hands. But what thanks has God received for it? What kind of returns have you made for all this kindness? As God has multiplied mercies, so have you multiplied provocations.

And yet now are you ready to quarrel for mercy, and to find fault with God, not only that he does not bestow more mercy, but to contend with him, because he does not bestow infinite mercy upon you, heaven with all it contains, and even himself, for your eternal portion. What ideas have you of yourself, that you think God is obliged to do so much for you, though you treat him ever so ungratefully for his kindness wherewith you have been followed all the days of your life.

4. You have voluntarily chosen to be with Satan in his enmity and opposition to God; how justly therefore might you be with him in his punishment! You did not choose to be on God's side, but rather chose to side with the devil, and have obstinately continued in it, against God's often repeated calls and counsels. You have chosen rather to hearken to Satan than to God, and would be with him in his work. You have given yourself up to him, to be subject to his power and government, in opposition to God; how justly therefore may God also give you up to him, and leave you in his power, to accomplish your ruin! Seeing you have yielded yourself to his will, to do as he would have you, surely God may leave you in his hands to execute his will upon you. If men will be with God's enemy, and on his side, why is God obliged to redeem them out of his hands, when they have done his work? Doubtless you would be glad to serve the devil, and be God's enemy while you live, and then to have God your friend, and deliver you from the devil, when you come to die. But will God be unjust if he deals otherwise by you? No, surely! It will be altogether and perfectly just, that you should have your portion with him

with whom you have chosen to work; and that you should be in his possession to whose dominion you have yielded yourself; and if you cry to God for deliverance, he may most justly give you that answer. Judges 10:14. "Go to the gods which you have chosen."

5. Consider how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you, and how just it would therefore be, if he should refuse to hear you when you call upon him. You are ready, it may be, to complain that you have often prayed, and earnestly begged of God to show you mercy, and yet have no answer of prayer: One says, I have been constant in prayer for so many years, and God has not heard me. Another says, I have done what I can; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able; I do not see how I can do more; and it will seem hard if after all I am denied. But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him? God has called earnestly, and for a long time; he has called and called again in his word, and in his providence, and you have refused. You was not uneasy for fear you should not show regard enough to his calls. You let him call as loud and as long as he would; for your part, you had no leisure to attend to what he said; you had other business to mind; you had these and those lusts to gratify and please, and worldly concerns to attend; you could not afford to stand considering of what God had to say to you. When the ministers of Christ have stood and pleaded with you, in his name, sabbath after sabbath, and have even spent their strength in it, how little was you moved! It did not alter you, but you went on still as you used to do; when you went away, you returned again to your sins, to your lasciviousness, to your vain mirth, to your covetousness, to your intemperance, and that has been the language of your heart and practice, Exodus 5:2. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? And yet is it now very hard that God does not hear your earnest calls, and that though your calling on God be not from any respect to him, but merely from self-love? The devil would beg as earnestly as you, if he had any hope to get salvation by it, and a thousand times as earnestly, and yet be as much of a devil as he is now. Are your calls more worthy to be heard than God's? Or is God more obliged to regard what you say to him, than you to regard his commands, counsels, and invitations to you? What can be more justice than this, Proverbs 1:24, &c. "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand,

and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

6. Have you not taken encouragement to sin against God, on that very presumption, that God would show you mercy when you sought it? And may not God justly refuse you that mercy that you have so presumed upon? You have flattered yourself, that though you did so, yet God would show you mercy when you cried earnestly to him for it: how righteous therefore would it be in God, to disappoint such a wicked presumption! It was upon that very hope that you dared to affront the majesty of heaven so dreadfully as you have done; and can you now be so sottish as to think that God is obliged not to frustrate that hope?

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect secret prayer which God has commanded, to gratify his lusts, to live a carnal vain life, to thwart God, to run upon him, and contemn him to his face, thinking with himself, "If I do so, God would not damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me;" must God be accounted hard because he will not do according to such a sinner's presumption?

Cannot he be excused from showing such a sinner mercy when he is pleased to seek it, without incurring the charge of being unjust; if this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honour and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuse of vile men, though they disobey, despise, and dishonour him, as much as they will; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace must not be in his own power and at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call. He must take these bold and vile contemners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it, and must forgive all their sins, and not only so, but must adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow eternal glory upon them. What mean, low, and strange thoughts have such men of God, who think thus of him! Consider, that you have injured God the more, and have been the

worse enemy to him, for his being a merciful God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How just is it therefore that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being the worse to God because he is a being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. This ought to win us, and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more, has something inexpressibly bad in it, and does in a peculiar manner enhance guilt, and incense wrath; as seems to be intimated, Romans 2:4, 5. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The greater the mercy of God is, the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been contrariwise with you; the consideration of the mercies of God being so exceeding great, is the thing wherewith you have encouraged yourself in sin. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account ventured to be a very great sinner. Though it was very offensive to God, though you heard that God infinitely hated sin, and that such practices as you went on in were exceeding contrary to his nature, will, and glory, yet that did not make you uneasy; you heard that he was a very merciful God, and had grace enough to pardon you, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. How long have some of you gone on in sin, and what great sins have some of you been guilty of, on that presumption! Your own conscience can give testimony to it, that this has made you refuse God's calls, and has made you regardless of his repeated commands. Now, how righteous would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful!

Your ingratitude has been the greater, that you have not only abused the attribute of God's mercy, taking encouragement from it to continue in sin, but you have also presumed that God would exercise infinite mercy to you

in particular; which consideration should have especially endeared God to you. You have taken encouragement to sin the more, from that consideration, that Christ came into the would and died to save sinners; such thanks has Christ had from you, for enduring such a tormenting death for his enemies! Now, how justly might God refuse that you should ever be the better for his Son's laying down his life! It was because of these things that you put off seeking salvation. You would take the pleasures of sin still longer, hardening yourself because mercy was infinite, and it would not be too late, if you sought it afterwards; now, how justly may God disappoint you in this, and so order it that it shall be too late!

7. How have some of you risen up against God, and in the frame of your minds opposed him in his sovereign dispensations! And how justly upon that account might God oppose you, and set himself against you! You never yet would submit to God; never willingly comply, that God should have dominion over the world, and that he should govern it for his own glory, according to his own wisdom. You, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault and quarrel with God. Isaiah 45:9. "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?" But yet you have ventured to do it. Romans 9:20. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" But yet you have thought you was big enough; you have taken upon you to call God to an account, why he does thus and thus; you have said to Jehovah, What dost thou?

If you have been restrained by fear from openly venting your opposition and enmity of heart against God's government, yet it has been in you; you have not been quiet in the frame of your mind; you have had the heart of a viper within, and have been ready to spit your venom at God. It is well if sometimes you have not actually done it, by tolerating blasphemous thoughts and malignant risings of heart against him; yea, and the frame of your heart in some measure appeared in impatient and fretful behaviour.- Now, seeing you have thus opposed God, how just is it that God should oppose you! Or is it because you are so much better, and so much greater than God, that it is a crime for him to make that opposition

against you which you make against him? Do you think that the liberty of making opposition is your exclusive prerogative, so that you may be an enemy to God, but God must by no means be an enemy to you, but must be looked upon under obligation nevertheless to help you, and save you by his blood, and bestow his best blessings upon you?

Consider how in the frame of your mind you have thwarted God in those very exercises of mercy towards others that you are seeking for yourself. God exercising his infinite grace towards your neighbours, has put you into an ill frame, and it may be, set you into a tumult of mind. How justly therefore may God refuse ever to exercise that mercy towards you! Have you not thus opposed God showing mercy to others, even at the very time when you pretended to be earnest with God for pity and help for yourself? Yea, and while you was endeavouring to get something wherewith to recommend yourself to God? And will you look to God still with a challenge of mercy, and contend with him for it notwithstanding? Can you who have such a heart, and have thus behaved yourself, come to God for any other than mere sovereign mercy?

II. If you should for ever be cast off by God, it would be agreeable to your treatment of Jesus Christ.

It would have been just with God if he had cast you off for ever, without ever making you the offer of a Saviour. But God hath not done that; he has provided a Saviour for sinners, and offered him to you, even his own Son Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men. All that are not for ever cast off are saved by him. God offers men salvation through him, and has promised us, that if we come to him, we shall not be cast off. But if you have treated, and still treat, this Saviour after such a manner, that if you should be eternally cast off by God, it would be most agreeable to your behaviour towards him; which appears by this, viz. "That you reject Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour."

If God offers you a Saviour from deserved punishment, and you will not receive him, then surely it is just that you should go without a Saviour. Or is God obliged, because you do not like this Saviour, to provide you another? He has given an infinitely honourable and glorious person, even his only begotten Son, to be a sacrifice for sin, and so provided salvation;

and this Saviour is offered to you: now if you refuse to accept him, is God therefore unjust if he does not save you? Is he obliged to save you in a way of your own choosing, because you do not like the way of his choosing? Or will you charge Christ with injustice because he does not become your Saviour, when at the same time you will not have him when he offers himself to you, and beseeches you to accept of him as your Saviour?

I am sensible that by this time many persons are ready to object against this. If all should speak what they now think, we should hear a murmuring all over the meeting-house, and one and another would say, "I cannot see how this can be, that I am not willing that Christ should be my Saviour, when I would give all the world that he was my Saviour: how is it possible that I should not be willing to have Christ for my Saviour when this is what I am seeking after, and praying for, and striving for, as for my life?"

Here therefore I would endeavour to convince you, that you are under a gross mistake in this matter. And, First, I would endeavour to show the grounds of your mistake. And Secondly, To demonstrate to you, that you have rejected, and do wilfully reject, Jesus Christ.

First, That you may see the weak grounds of your mistake, consider,

1. There is a great deal of difference between a willingness not to be damned, and a being willing to receive Christ for your Savior. You have the former; there is no doubt of that: nobody supposes that you love misery so as to choose an eternity of it; and so doubtless you are willing to be saved from eternal misery. But that is a very different thing from being willing to come to Christ: persons very commonly mistake the one for the other, but they are quite two things. You may love the deliverance, but hate the deliverer. You tell of a willingness; but consider what is the object of that willingness. It does not respect Christ; the way of salvation by him is not at all the object of it; but it is wholly terminated on your escape from misery. The inclination of your will goes no further than self, it never reaches Christ. You are willing not to be miserable; that is, you love yourself, and there your will and choice terminate. And it is but a vain pretence and delusion to say or think, that you are willing to accept

of Christ.

2. There is certainly a great deal of difference between a forced compliance and a free willingness. Force and freedom cannot consist together. Now that willingness, whereby you think you are willing to have Christ for a Saviour, is merely a forced thing. Your heart does not go out after Christ of itself, but you are forced and driven to seek an interest in him. Christ has no share at all in your heart; there is no manner of closing of the heart with him. This forced compliance is not what Christ seeks of you; he seeks a free and willing acceptance, Psalm 110:3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He seeks not that you should receive him against your will, but with a free will. He seeks entertainment in your heart and choice.- And if you refuse thus to receive Christ, how just is it that Christ should refuse to receive you? How reasonable are Christ's terms, who offers to save all those that willingly, or with a good will, accept of him for their Saviour! Who can rationally expect that Christ should force himself upon any man to be his Saviour? Or what can be looked for more reasonable, than that all who would be saved by Christ, should heartily and freely entertain him? And surely it would be very dishonourable for Christ to offer himself upon lower terms.- But I would now proceed,

Secondly, To show that you are not willing to have Christ for a Saviour. To convince you of it, consider,

1. How it is possible that you should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour from the desert of a punishment that you are not sensible you have deserved. If you are truly willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour, it must be as a sacrifice to make atonement for your guilt. Christ came into the world on this errand, to offer himself as an atonement, to answer for our desert of punishment. But how can you be willing to have Christ for a Saviour from a desert of hell, if you be not sensible that you have a desert of hell? If you have not really deserved everlasting burnings in hell, then the very offer of an atonement for such a desert is an imposition upon you. If you have no such guilt upon you, then the very offer of a satisfaction for that guilt is an injury, because it implies in it a charge of guilt that you are free from. Now therefore it is impossible that a man who is not convinced of his guilt can be willing to accept of such an offer;

because he cannot be willing to accept the charge which the offer implies. A man who is not convinced that he has deserved so dreadful a punishment, cannot willingly submit to be charged with it. If he thinks he is willing, it is but a mere forced, feigned business; because in his heart he looks upon himself greatly injured; and therefore he cannot freely accept of Christ, under that notion of a Saviour from the desert of such a punishment; for such an acceptance is an implicit owning that he does deserve such a punishment.

I do not say, but that men may be willing to be saved from an undeserved punishment; they may rather not suffer it, than suffer it. But a man cannot be willing to accept one at God's hands, under the notion of a Saviour from a punishment deserved from him which he thinks he has not deserved; it is impossible that any one should freely allow a Saviour under that notion. Such an one cannot like the way of salvation by Christ; for if he thinks he has not deserved hell, then he will think that freedom from hell is a debt; and therefore cannot willingly and heartily receive it as a free gift.- If a king should condemn a man to some tormenting death, which the condemned person thought himself not deserving of, but looked upon the sentence as unjust and cruel, and the king, when the time of execution drew nigh, should offer him his pardon, under the notion of a very great act of grace and clemency, the condemned person never could willingly and heartily allow it under that notion, because he judged himself unjustly condemned.

Now by this it is evident that you are not willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour; because you never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God 's sight, as to be indeed convinced that you lay justly condemned to the punishment of hell. You never was convinced that you had forfeited all favour, and was in God's hands, and at his sovereign and arbitrary disposal, to be either destroyed or saved, just as he pleased. You never yet was convinced of the sovereignty of God. Hence are there so many objections arising against the justice of your punishment from original sin, and from God's decree, from mercy shown to others, and the like.

2. That you are not sincerely willing to accept of Christ as your Saviour, appears by this, That you never have been convinced that he is sufficient

for the work of your salvation. You never had a sight or sense of any such excellency or worthiness in Christ, as should give such great value to his blood and his mediation with God, as that it was sufficient to be accepted for such exceeding guilty creatures, who have so provoked God, and exposed themselves to such amazing wrath. Saying it is so and allowing it be as others say, is a very different thing from being really convinced of it, and a being made sensible of it in your own heart. The sufficiency of Christ depends upon, or rather consists in his excellency. It is because he is so excellent a person that his blood is of sufficient value to atone for sin, and it is hence that his obedience is so worthy in God's sight; it is also hence that his intercession is so prevalent; and therefore those that never had any spiritual sight or sense of Christ's excellency, cannot be sensible of his sufficiency.

And that sinners are not convinced that Christ is sufficient for the work he has undertaken, appears most manifestly when they are under great convictions of their sin, and danger of God's wrath. Though it may be before they thought they could allow Christ to be sufficient, (for it is easy to allow any one to be sufficient for our defense at a time when we see no danger,) yet when they come to be sensible of their guilt and God's wrath, what discouraging thoughts do they entertain! How are they ready to draw towards despair, as if there were no hope or help for such wicked creatures as they! The reason is, They have no apprehension or sense of any other way that God's majesty can be vindicated, but only in their misery. To tell them of the blood of Christ signifies nothing, it does not relieve their sinking, despairing hearts. This makes it most evident that they are not convinced that Christ is sufficient to be their Mediator.- And as long as they are unconvinced of this, it is impossible they should be willing to accept of him as their Mediator and Saviour. A man in distressing fear will not willingly betake himself to a fort that he judges not sufficient to defend him from the enemy. A man will not willingly venture out into the ocean in a ship that he suspects is leaky, and will sink before he gets through his voyage.

3. It is evident that you are not willing to have Christ for your Saviour, because you have so mean an opinion of him, that you durst not trust his faithfulness. One that undertakes to be the Saviour of souls had need be

faithful; for if he fails in such a trust, how great is the loss! But you are not convinced of Christ's faithfulness; as is evident, because at such times as when you are in a considerable measure sensible of your guilt and God's anger, you cannot be convinced that Christ is willing to accept of you, or that he stands ready to receive you, if you should come to him, though Christ so much invites you to come to him, and has so fully declared that he will not reject you, if you do come; as particularly, John 6:37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Now, there is no man can be heartily willing to trust his eternal welfare in the hands of an unfaithful person, or one whose faithfulness he suspects.

4. You are not willing to be saved in that way by Christ, as is evident, because you are not willing that your own goodness should be set at nought. In the way of salvation by Christ men's own goodness is wholly set at nought; there is no account at all made of it. Now you cannot be willing to be saved in a way wherein your own goodness is set at nought, as is evident, since you make much of it yourself. You make much of your prayers and pains in religion, and are often thinking of them; how considerable do they appear to you, when you look back upon them! And some of you are thinking how much more you have done than others, and expecting some respect or regard that God should manifest to what you do. Now, if you make so much of what you do yourself, it is impossible that you should be freely willing that God should make nothing of it . As we may see in other things; if a man is proud of a great estate, or if he values himself much upon his honourable office, or his great abilities, it is impossible that he should like it, and heartily approve of it, that others should make light of these things and despise them.

Seeing therefore it is so evident, that you refuse to accept of Christ as your Saviour, why is Christ to be blamed that he does not save you? Christ has offered himself to you, to be your Saviour in time past, and he continues offering himself still, and you continue to reject him, and yet complain that he does not save you.- So strangely unreasonable, and inconsistent with themselves, are gospel sinners!

But I expect there are many of you that still object. Such an objection as this, is probably now in the hearts of many here present.

Objection. If I am not willing to have Christ for my Saviour, I cannot make myself willing.- But I would give an answer to this objection by laying down two things, that must be acknowledged to be exceeding evident.

1. It is no excuse, that you cannot receive Christ of yourself, unless you would if you could. This is so evident of itself, that it scarce needs any proof. Certainly if persons would not if they could, it is just the same thing as to the blame that lies upon them, whether they can or cannot. If you were willing, and then found that you could not, your being unable would alter the case, and might be some excuse; because then the defect would not be in your will, but only in your ability. But as long as you will not, it is no matter, whether you have ability or no ability.

If you are not willing to accept of Christ, it follows that you have no sincere willingness to be willing; because the will always necessarily approves of and rests in its own acts. To suppose the contrary, would be to suppose a contradiction; it would be to suppose that a man's will is contrary to itself, or that he wills contrary to what he himself wills. As you are not willing to come to Christ, and cannot make yourself willing, so you have no sincere desire to be willing; and therefore may most justly perish without a Saviour. There is no excuse at all for you; for say what you will about your inability, the seat of your blame lies in your perverse will, that is an enemy to the Saviour. It is in vain for you to tell of your want of power, as long as your will is found defective. If a man should hate you, and smite you in the face, but should tell you at the same time, that he hated you so much, that he could not help choosing and willing so to do, would you take it the more patiently for that? Would not your indignation be rather stirred up the more?

2. If you would be willing if you could, that is no excuse, unless your unwillingness to be willing be sincere. That which is hypocritical, and does not come from the heart, but is merely forced, ought wholly to be set aside, as worthy of no consideration; because common sense teaches, that what is not hearty, but hypocritical is indeed nothing, being only a show of what is not; but that which is good for nothing, ought to go for nothing. But if you set aside all that is not free, and call nothing a willingness, but a free hearty willingness, then see how the case stands, and whether or no

you have not lost all your excuse for standing out against the calls of the gospel. You say you would make yourself willing to accept if you could; but it is not from any good principle that you are willing for that. It is not from any free inclination, or true respect to Christ, or any love to your duty, or any spirit of obedience. It is not from the influence of any real respect, or tendency in your heart, towards any thing good, or from any other principle than such as is in the hearts of devils, and would make them have the same sort of willingness in the same circumstances. It is therefore evident, that there can be no goodness in that would be willing to come to Christ: and that which has no goodness, cannot be an excuse for any badness. If there be no good in it, then it signifies nothing, and weighs nothing, when put into the scales to counterbalance that which is bad.

Sinners therefore spend their time in foolish arguing and objecting, making much of that which is good for nothing, making those excuses that are not worth offering. It is in vain to keep making objection. You stand justly condemned. The blame lies at your door: Thrust it off from you as often as you will, it will return upon you. Sew fig-leaves as long as you will, your nakedness will appear. You continue wilfully and wickedly rejecting Jesus Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour, and therefore it is sottish madness in you to charge Christ with injustice that he does not save you.

Here is the sin of unbelief! Thus the guilt of that great sin lies upon you! If you never had thus treated a Saviour, you might most justly have been damned to all eternity: it would but be exactly agreeable to your treatment of God. But besides this, when God, notwithstanding, has offered you his own dear Son, to save you from this endless misery you had deserved, and not only so, but to make you happy eternally in the enjoyment of himself, you have refused him, and would not have him for your Saviour, and still refuse to comply with the offers of the gospel; what can render any person more inexcusable? If you should now perish for ever, what can you have to say?

Hereby the justice of God in your destruction appears in two respects:

1. It is more abundantly manifest that it is just that you should be

destroyed. Justice never appears so conspicuous as it does after refused and abused mercy. Justice in damnation appears abundantly the more clear and bright, after a wilful rejection of offered salvation. What can an offended prince do more than freely offer pardon to a condemned malefactor? And if he refuses to accept of it, will any one say that his execution is unjust?

2. God's justice will appear in your greater destruction. Besides the guilt that you would have had if a Saviour never had been offered, you bring that great additional guilt upon you, of most ungratefully refusing offered deliverance. What more base and vile treatment of God can there be, than for you, when justly condemned to eternal misery, and ready to be executed, and God graciously sends his own Son, who comes and knocks at your door with a pardon in his hand, and not only a pardon, but a deed of eternal glory; I say, what can be worse, than for you, out of dislike and enmity against God and his Son, to refuse to accept those benefits at his hands? How justly may the anger of God be greatly incensed and increased by it! When a sinner thus ungratefully rejects mercy, his last error is worse than the first; this is more heinous than all his former rebellion, and may justly bring down more fearful wrath upon him.

The heinousness of this sin of rejecting a Saviour especially appears in two things:

1. The greatness of the benefits offered: which appears in the greatness of the deliverance, which is from inexpressible degrees of corruption and wickedness of heart and life, the least degree of which is infinitely evil; and from misery that is everlasting; and in the greatness and glory of the inheritance purchased and offered. Hebrews 2:3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."

2. The wonderfulness of the way in which these benefits are procured and offered. That God should lay help on his own Son, when our case was so deplorable that help could be had in no mere creature; and that he should undertake for us, and should come into the world, and take upon him our nature, and should not only appear in a low state of life, but should die such a death, and endure such torments and contempt for sinners while enemies, how wonderful is it! And what tongue or pen can set forth the

greatness of the ingratitude, baseness, and perverseness there is in it, when a perishing sinner that is in the most extreme necessity of salvation, rejects it, after it is procured in such a way as this! That so glorious a person should be thus treated, and that when he comes on so gracious an errand! That he should stand so long offering himself and calling and inviting, as he has done to many of you, and all to no purpose, but all the while be set at nought! Surely you might justly be cast into hell without one more offer of a Saviour! Yea, and thrust down into the lowest hell! Herein you have exceeded the very devils; for they never rejected the offers of such glorious mercy; no, nor of any mercy at all. This will be the distinguishing condemnation of gospel-sinners, John 3:18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."- That outward smoothness of your carriage towards Christ, that appearance of respect to him in your looks, your speeches, and gestures, do not argue but that you set him at nought in your heart. There may be much of these outward shows of respect, and yet you be like Judas, that betrayed the Son of man with a kiss; and like those mockers that bowed the knee before him, and at the same time spit in his face.

III. If God should for ever cast you off and destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of others.- It would be no other than what would be exactly answerable to your behaviour towards your fellow-creatures, that have the same human nature, and are naturally in the same circumstances with you, and that you ought to love as yourself. And that appears especially in two things.

1. You have many of you been opposite in your spirit to the salvation of others. There are several ways that natural men manifest a spirit of opposition against the salvation of souls. It sometimes appears by a fear that their companions, acquaintances, and equals, will obtain mercy, and so become unspeakably happier than they. It is sometimes manifested by an uneasiness at the news of what others have hopefully obtained. It appears when persons envy others for it, and dislike them the more, and disrelish their talk, and avoid their company, and cannot bear to hear their religious discourse, and especially to receive warnings and counsels

from them. And it oftentimes appears by their backwardness to entertain charitable thoughts of them, and by their being brought with difficulty to believe that they have obtained mercy, and a forwardness to listen to any thing that seems to contradict it. The devil hated to own Job's sincerity, Job 1:7, &c. and chapter 2, verses 3, 4, 5. There appears very often much of this spirit of the devil in natural men. Sometimes they are ready to make a ridicule of others' pretended godliness; they speak of the ground of others' hopes, as the enemies of the Jews did of the wall that they built. Nehemiah 4:3. "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, That which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." There are many that join with Sanballat and Tobiah, and are of the same spirit with them. There always was, and always will be, an enmity betwixt the seed of the serpent and the seed of the women. It appeared in Cain, who hated his brother, because he was more acceptable to God than himself; and it appears still in these times, and in this place. There are many that are like the elder brother, who could not bear that the prodigal when he returned should be received with such joy and good entertainment, and was put into a fret by it, both against his brother that had returned, and his father that had made him so welcome. Luke 15.

Thus have many of you been opposite to the salvation of others, who stand in as great necessity of it as you. You have been against their being delivered from everlasting misery, who can bear it no better than you; not because their salvation would do you any hurt, or their damnation help you, any otherwise than as it would gratify that vile spirit that is so much like the spirit of the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy. How just therefore is it that God should be opposite to your salvation! If you have so little love or mercy in you as to begrudge your neighbour's salvation, whom you have no cause to hate, but the law of God and nature requires you to love, why is God bound to exercise such infinite love and mercy to you, as to save you at the price of his own blood? you, whom he is no way bound to love, but who have deserved his hatred a thousand and a thousand times? You are not willing that others should be converted, who have behaved themselves injuriously towards you; and yet, will you count it hard if God does not bestow converting grace upon you that have deserved ten thousand times as ill of God, as ever any of your neighbours have of you?

You are opposite to God's showing mercy to those that you think have been vicious persons, and are very unworthy of such mercy. Is others' unworthiness a just reason why God should not bestow mercy on them? And yet will God be hard, if, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, and the abominableness of your spirit and practice in his sight, he does not show you mercy? You would have God bestow liberally on you, and upbraid not; but yet when he shows mercy to others, you are ready to upbraid as soon as you hear of it; you immediately are thinking with yourself how ill they have behaved themselves; and it may be your mouths on this occasion are open, enumerating and aggravating the sins they have been guilty of. You would have God bury all your faults, and wholly blot out all your transgressions; but yet if he bestows mercy on others, it may be you will take that occasion to rake up all their old faults that you can think of. You do not much reflect on and condemn yourself for your baseness and unjust spirit towards others, in your opposition to their salvation; you do not quarrel with yourself, and condemn yourself for this; but yet you in your heart will quarrel with God, and fret at his dispensations, because you think he seems opposite to showing mercy to you. One would think that the consideration of these things should for ever stop your mouth.

2. Consider how you have promoted others' damnation. Many of you, by the bad examples you have set, by corrupting the minds of others, by your sinful conversation, by leading them into or strengthening them in sin, and by the mischief you have done in human society other ways that might be mentioned, have been guilty of those things that have tended to others' damnation. You have heretofore appeared on the side of sin and Satan, and have strengthened their interest, and have been many ways accessary to others' sins, have hardened their hearts, and thereby have done what has tended to the ruin of their souls.- Without doubt there are those here present who have been in a great measure the means of others' damnation. One man may really be a means of others' damnation as well as salvation. Christ charges the scribes and Pharisees with this, Matthew 23:13. "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in." We have no reason to think that this congregation has none in it who are cursed from day to day by poor souls that are roaring out in hell, whose

damnation they have been the means of, or have greatly contributed to.- There are many who contribute to their own children's damnation, by neglecting their education, by setting them bad examples, and bringing them up in sinful ways. They take some care of their bodies, but take little care of their poor souls; they provide for them bread to eat, but deny them the bread of life, that their famishing souls stand in need of. And are there no such parents here who have thus treated their children? If their children be not gone to hell, no thanks to them; it is not because they have not done what has tended to their destruction. Seeing therefore you have had no more regard to others' salvation, and have promoted their damnation, how justly might God leave you to perish yourself!

IV. If God should eternally cast you off, it would but be agreeable to your own behaviour towards yourself; and that in two respects:

1. In being so careless of your own salvation. You have refused to take care for your salvation, as God has counselled and commanded you from time to time; and why may not God neglect it, now you seek it of him? Is God obliged to be more careful of your happiness, than you are either of your own happiness or his glory? Is God bound to take that care for you, out of love to you, that you will not take for yourself, either from love to yourself, or regard to his authority? How long, and how greatly, have you neglected the welfare of your precious soul, refusing to take pains and deny yourself, or put yourself a little out of your way for your salvation, while God has been calling upon you! Neither your duty to God, nor love to your own soul, were enough to induce you to do little things for your own eternal welfare; and yet do you now expect that God should do great things, putting forth almighty power, and exercising infinite mercy for it? You was urged to take care for your salvation, and not to put it off. You was told that was the best time before you grew older, and that it might be, if you would put it off, God would not hear you afterwards; but yet you would not hearken; you would run the venture of it. Now how justly might God order it so, that it should be too late, leaving you to seek in vain! You was told, that you would repent of it if you delayed; but you would not hear: how justly therefore may God give you cause to repent of it, by refusing to show you mercy now! If God sees you going on in ways

contrary to his commands and his glory, and requires you to forsake them, and tells you that they tend to the destruction of your own soul, and therefore counsels you to avoid them, and you refuse; how just would it be if God should be provoked by it, henceforward to be as careless of the good of your soul as you are yourself!

2. You have not only neglected your salvation, but you have wilfully taken direct courses to undo yourself. You have gone on in those ways and practices which have directly tended to your damnation, and have been perverse and obstinate it. You cannot plead ignorance; you had all the light set before you that you could desire. God told you that you was undoing yourself; but yet you would do it. He told you that the path you was going in led to destruction, and counselled you to avoid it; but you would not hearken. How justly therefore may God leave you to be undone! You have obstinately persisted to travel in the way that leads to hell for a long time, contrary to God's continual counsels and commands, till it may be at length you are got almost to your journey's end, and are come near to hell's gate, and so begin to be sensible of your danger and misery; and not account it unjust and hard if God will not deliver you! You have destroyed yourself, and destroyed yourself wilfully, contrary to God's repeated counsels, yea, and destroyed yourself in fighting against God. Now therefore, why do you blame any but yourself if you are destroyed? If you will undo yourself in opposing God, and while God opposes you by his calls and counsels, and, it may be too, by the convictions of his Spirit, what can you object against it, if God now leaves you to be undone? You would have your own way, and did not like that God should oppose you in it, and your way was to ruin your own soul; how just therefore is it, if, now at length, God ceases to oppose you, and falls in with you, and lets your soul be ruined; and as you would destroy yourself, so should put to his hand to destroy you too! The ways you went on in had a natural tendency to your misery: if you would drink poison in opposition to God, and in contempt of him and his advice, who can you blame but yourself if you are poisoned, and so perish? If you would run into the fire against all restraints both of God's mercy and authority, you must even blame yourself if you are burnt.

Thus I have proposed some things to your consideration, which, if you

are not exceeding blind, senseless, and perverse, will stop your mouth, and convince you that you stand justly condemned before God; and that he would in no wise deal hardly with you, but altogether justly, in denying you any mercy, and in refusing to hear your prayers, though you pray never so earnestly, and never so often, and continue in it never so long. God may utterly disregard your tears and moans, your heavy heart, your earnest desires, and great endeavours; and he may cast you into eternal destruction, without any regard to your welfare, denying you converting grace, and giving you over to Satan, and at last cast you into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, to be there to eternity, having no rest day or night, for ever glorifying his justice upon you in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Objection. But here many may still object, (for I am sensible it is a hard thing to stop sinners' mouths,) "God shows mercy to others that have done these things as well as I, yea, that have done a great deal worse than I."

Answer. 1. That does not prove that God is any way bound to show mercy to you, or them either. If God bestows it on others, he does not so because he is bound to bestow it: he might if he had pleased, with glorious justice, have denied it them. If God bestows it on some, that does not prove that he is bound to bestow it on any; and if he is bound to bestow it on none, then he is not bound to bestow it on you. God is in debt to none; and if he gives to some that he is not in debt to, because it is his pleasure, that does not bring him into debt to others. It alters not the case as to you, whether others have it, or have it not: you do not deserve damnation the less, than if mercy never had been bestowed on any at all. Matthew 20:15. "Is thine eye evil, because mine is good?"

2. If this objection be good, then the exercise of God's mercy is not in his own right, and his grace is not his own to give. That which God may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own; for that which is one's own, is at his own disposal: but if it be not God's own, then he is not capable of making a gift or present of it to any one; it is impossible to give what is a debt.- What is it that you would make of God? Must the great God be tied up, that he must not use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts, but if he bestows them on one, must be looked upon obliged to bestow them

on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right, with respect to the gifts of his grace, that a man has to his money or goods? Is it because God is not so great, and should be more in subjection than man, that this cannot be allowed him? If any of you see cause to show kindness to a neighbour, do all the rest of your neighbours come to you, and tell you, that you owe them so much as you have given to such a man? But this is the way that you deal with God, as though God were not worthy to have as absolute a property in his goods, as you have in yours.

At this rate God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow: if he has a mind to show peculiar favour to some, or to lay some particular persons under peculiar obligations to him, he cannot do it; because he has no special gift at his own disposal. If this be the case, why do you pray to God to bestow saving grace upon you? If God does not do fairly to deny it you, because he bestows it on others, then it is not worth your while to pray for it, but you may go and tell him that he has bestowed it on others as bad or worse than you, and so demand it of him as a debt. And at this rate persons never need to thank God for salvation, when it is bestowed; for what occasion is there to thank God for that which was not at his own disposal, and that he could not fairly have denied? The thing at bottom is, that men have low thoughts of God, and high thoughts of themselves; and therefore it is that they look upon God as having so little right, and they so much. Matthew 20:15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

3. God may justly show greater respect to others than to you, for you have shown greater respect to others than to God. You have rather chosen to offend God than men. God only shows a greater respect to others, who are by nature your equals, than to you; but you have shown a greater respect to those that are infinitely inferior to God than to him. You have shown a greater regard to wicked men than to God; you have honoured them more, loved them better, and adhered to them rather than to him. Yea, you have honoured the devil, in many respects, more than God: you have chosen his will and his interest, rather than God's will and his glory: you have chosen a little worldly pelf, rather than God: you have set more by a vile lust than by him: you have chosen these things, and rejected God. You have set your heart on these things, and cast God behind your

back: and where is the injustice if God is pleased to show greater respect to others than to you, or if he chooses others and rejects you? You have shown greater respect to vile and worthless things, and no respect to God's glory; and why may not God set his love on others, and have no respect to your happiness? You have shown great respect to others, and not to God, whom you are laid under infinite obligations to respect above all; and why may not God show respect to others, and not to you, who never have laid him under the least obligation?

And will you not be ashamed, notwithstanding all these things, still to open your mouth, to object and cavil about the decrees of God, and other things that you cannot fully understand. Let the decrees of God be what they will, that alters not the case as to your liberty, any more than if God had only foreknown. And why is God to blame for decreeing things? Especially since he decrees nothing but good. How unbecoming an infinitely wise Being would it have been to have made a world, and let things run at random, without disposing events, or fore-ordering how they should come to pass? And what is that to you, how God has fore-ordered things, as long as your constant experience teaches you, that it does not hinder your doing what you choose to do. This you know, and your daily practice and behaviour amongst men declares that you are fully sensible of it with respect to yourself and others. Still to object, because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceedingly unreasonable. Your own conscience charges you with great guilt, and with those things that have been mentioned, let the secret things of God be what they will. Your conscience charges you with those vile dispositions, and that base behaviour towards God, that you would at any time most highly resent in your neighbour towards you, and that not a whit the less for any concern those secret counsels and mysterious dispensations of God may have in the matter. It is in vain for you to exalt yourself against an infinitely great, and holy, and just God. If you continue in it, it will be to your eternal shame and confusion, when hereafter you shall see at whose door all the blame of your misery lies.

I will finish what I have to say to natural men in the application of this doctrine, with a caution not to improve the doctrine to discouragement.

For though it would be righteous in God for ever to cast you off, and destroy you, yet it would also be just in God to save you, in and through Christ, who has made complete satisfaction for all sin. Romans 3:25, 26. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Yea, God may, through this Mediator, not only justly, but honourably, show you mercy. The blood of Christ is so precious, that it is fully sufficient to pay the debt you have contracted, and perfectly to vindicate the Divine Majesty from all the dishonour cast upon it, by these many great sins of yours that have been mentioned. It was as great, and indeed a much greater thing, for Christ to die, than it would have been for you and all mankind to have burnt in hell to all eternity. Of such dignity and excellency is Christ in the eyes of God, that, seeing he has suffered so much for poor sinners, God is willing to be at peace with them, however vile and unworthy they have been, and on how many accounts soever the punishment would be just. So that you need not be at all discouraged from seeking mercy, for there is enough in Christ.

Indeed it would not become the glory of God's majesty to show mercy to you, so sinful and vile a creature, for any thing that you have done; for such worthless and despicable things as your prayers, and other religious performances. It would be very dishonourable and unworthy of God so to do, and it is in vain to expect it. He will show mercy only on Christ's account; and that, according to his sovereign pleasure, on whom he pleases, when he pleases, and in what manner he pleases. You cannot bring him under obligation by your works; do what you will, he will not look on himself obliged. But if it be his pleasure, he can honourably show mercy through Christ to any sinner of you all, not one in this congregation excepted.- Therefore here is encouragement for you still to seek and wait, notwithstanding all your wickedness; agreeable to Samuel's speech to the children of Israel, when they were terrified with the thunder and rain that God sent, and when guilt stared them in the face, 1 Samuel 12:20. "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart."

I would conclude this discourse by putting the godly in mind of the freeness and wonderfulness of the grace of God towards them. For such were the same of you.- The case was just so with you as you have heard; you had such a wicked heart, you lived such a wicked life, and it would have been most just with God for ever to have cast you off: but he has had mercy upon you; he hath made his glorious grace appear in your everlasting salvation. You had no love to God; but yet he has exercised unspeakable love to you. You have contemned God, and set light by him: but so great a value has God's grace set on you and your happiness, that you have been redeemed at the price of the blood of his own Son. You chose to be with Satan in his service; but yet God hath made you a joint heir with Christ of his glory. You was ungrateful for past mercies; yet God not only continued those mercies, but bestowed unspeakably greater mercies upon you. You refused to hear when God called; yet God heard you when you called. You abused the infiniteness of God's mercy to encourage yourself in sin against him; yet God has manifested the infiniteness of that mercy, in the exercises of it towards you. You have rejected Christ, and set him at nought; and yet he is become your Saviour. You have neglected your own salvation; but God has not neglected it. You have destroyed yourself; but yet in God has been your help. God has magnified his free grace towards you, and not to others; because he has chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you.

O! what cause is here for praise! What obligations you are under to bless the Lord who hath dealt bountifully with you, and magnify his holy name! What cause for you to praise God in humility, to walk humbly before him. Ezekiel 16:63. "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God!" You shall never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification; but lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. You have reason, the more abundantly, to open your mouth in God's praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby he, and he alone, hath made you to differ from others.

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The Importance and Advantage of a Through Knowledge of Divine Truth

"For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God;
and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." [Hebrews 5:12]

These words are a complaint, which the apostle makes of a certain defect in the Christian Hebrews, to whom he wrote. Wherein we may observe,

1. What the defect complained of is, viz., a want of such a proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains of them, that they had not made that progress in their acquaintance with the things of divinity or things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in spiritual and experimental knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a doctrinal acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity; as is evident by several things.

It appears by the manner in which the apostle introduces this complaint or reproof. The occasion of his introducing it, is this: in the next verse but one preceding he mentions Christ's being a high priest after the order of Melchizedek: "Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." This Melchizedek being in the Old Testament, which was the oracles of God, held forth as an eminent type of Christ, and the account we there have of Melchizedek containing many gospel mysteries, these the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Hebrews. But he apprehended that through their weakness in knowledge, and little acquaintance in mysteries of that nature, they would not understand him; and therefore breaks off for the present from saying anything about Melchizedek. Thus,

in verse 11, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing;" i.e., there are many things concerning Melchizedek, which contain wonderful gospel mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dullness and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit; and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too strong.

Then come in the words of the text: "For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." As much as to say, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of divinity, and the holy Scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: but it is not so with you.

Again, The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed and received by human teaching; as appears by that expression, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers;" which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a doctrinal knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, The apostle speaks of such a knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to digest strong meat; i.e., to understand those things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: for everyone that useth milk, is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Again, It is such a knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion. As here: "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter, advises them, "to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection."

2. We may observe wherein the fault of this defect appears, viz., in that they had not made proficiency according to their time. For the time, they

ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself-- Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge; and, leaving the food of babes, which is milk, should learn to digest strong meat.

DOCTRINE: Every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge in divinity.

This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers: it is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the Scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge; and most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others., But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers: or if he had thought, that this concerned Christians in general, only as a thing by the by, and that their time should not, in a considerable measure, be taken up with this business; he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show,

1. What divinity is.

2. What kind of knowledge in divinity is intended.

3. Why knowledge in divinity is necessary.

4. Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in this knowledge.

First, I shall very briefly show what divinity is.

Various definitions have been given of it by those who have treated on the

subject. I shall not now stand to inquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition; but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a notion of it to this auditory.

By divinity is meant, that science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion. There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant about various objects; about the works of nature in general; as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But there is one science, or one certain kind of knowledge and doctrine, which is above all the rest, as it is concerning God and the great business of religion: this is divinity; which is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a certain book that he hath given for that end, full of instruction. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called natural religion or divinity. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of any significance to us, any otherwise than, as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth of divinity in this matter. Therefore it cannot be said, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian divinity by the light of nature. The light of nature teaches no truth as it is in Jesus. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

Divinity comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that

we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, the doctrine of living to God and by some who seem to be more accurate, the doctrine of living to God by Christ. It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is nothing in divinity, no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz., as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter--But I hasten to the

Second thing proposed, viz., To show what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

Here I would observe:

1. That there are two kinds of knowledge of the things of divinity, viz., speculative and practical, or in other terms, natural and spiritual. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: it principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the heart, the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists speculative or natural knowledge of the things of divinity; in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

2. Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: but it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, even a spiritual and practical knowledge of divinity, is of the greatest importance; for a speculative knowledge of it, without a spiritual

knowledge, is in vain and to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge; as may be shown by and by.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such knowledge as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this exclusively of the other,. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended; it is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity. The latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other, as its end.

But I proceed to the third thing proposed, viz., to show the usefulness and necessity of knowledge in divinity.

1. There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore, the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men whom Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. They are to teach the things of divinity. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a means of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. Men in such things receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeably to the apostle's arguing in 1 Cor. 14:2-6.

No speech can be any means of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there,

and he that spoke, had spoken only into the air; as it follows in the passage just quoted, verses 6-10. He that doth not understand, can receive no faith, nor any other grace; for God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding: Rom. 10:14, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" So there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind: it can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word.

So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. and what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that nothing can come at the heart, but through the door of the understanding: and there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and divine excellency of such and such things contained in divinity, unless he first have a notion that there are such and such things.

2. Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous heathens. The heathens remain in gross heathenish darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of the truths of divinity. So if we live under the preaching of the gospel, this will make us to differ from them, only by conveying to us more knowledge of the things of divinity.

3. If a man have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast, as a man with this knowledge. But the things of divinity are the things to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any purpose, any further than he hath knowledge of the things of divinity.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary. Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, and natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than of all other sciences whatever.

I come now to the fourth, and principal thing proposed under the doctrine, viz., to give the reasons why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of divinity. This implies two things.

1. That Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them that they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

2. That this endeavoring to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the by, but all Christians should make a business of it: they should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling. The reason of both these may appear in the following things.

(1.) Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beasts for, and therefore hath given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the by. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the by, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others; whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual understanding and knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their business, but, instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior powers, to provide wherewithal to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites, and so rather make their understanding a servant to their inferior powers, than their inferior powers servants to their understanding; not only behave themselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God hath set them above the brutes, by giving them understanding.

God hath given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties: and some things he hath given him superior to the brutes, the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man those faculties whereby he is above the brutes, to be subject to those which he hath in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant to the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers

to be employed in subserviency to man's understanding; and therefore it must be a great part of man's principal business, to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow, that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity; for the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they were in the dark, as they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy; and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy, we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

(2.) The things of divinity are things of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of them. There are no things so worthy to be known as these things. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself, the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science: in the next place, Jesus Christ, as Godman and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the

hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure: all these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever were in the world, and are also the subject of the study of the angels in heaven; 1 Pet. 1:10,11,12.

These things are so excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labor of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls hid in the earth, but should accidentally be found, and should be opened among us with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather of it; would not every one think it worth his while to make a business of gathering it while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is a far more rich treasure than any one of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches! But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. The things of divinity not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrines of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right.

But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines: this nearly concern every one. They are about those things which relate to every man's eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines; let them dispute them out among

themselves as they can; they concern not us: for they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines of divinity which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistencies of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is the Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Saviour, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he hath done and suffered, as ministers and divines.

The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner's justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all; for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines of divinity, which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian. None of the things which God hath taught us in his word are needless speculations, or trivial matters; all of them are indeed important points.

4. We may argue from the great things which God hath done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he hath left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But the things of divinity being of infinitely greater importance to us, he hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but hath himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm to us this revelation; raising up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of

nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate; that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communicated to the world. He hath also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men; and hath often himself appeared to men in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence; and now in these last days hath sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divinity; Heb. 1 at the beginning. By means of all, God hath given a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things hath God done not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning; but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to teach us, we ought not to do little to learn.

God hath not made giving instructions to men in things of divinity a business by the by; but a business which he hath undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart hath been greatly engaged; which is sometimes in Scripture signified by the expression of God's rising early to teach us, and to send prophets and teachers to us. Jer. 7:25, "Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them" And so, verse 13, "I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking." This is a figurative speech, signifying, that God hath not done this as a by business, but as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged; because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in.-- If God hath been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning; nor should we make growing in knowledge a by business, but a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God hath given us, from the largeness of that book which God hath given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us;

after that, other books were from time to time added; much is taught us by David and Solomon; and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets: yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of divinity.

This book was written for the use of all; all are directed to search the Scriptures. John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me;" and Isaiah 34:16, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." They that read and understand are pronounced blessed. Rev. 1:3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy." If this be true of that particular book of the Revelation, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a by concernment with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the Scriptures were written for that end, that they might be understood; otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner's instruction; and unless we endeavor to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain; for we can receive benefit by no more of the Scriptures than we understand, no more than if they were locked up in an unknown tongue. We have reason to bless God that he hath given us such various and plentiful instruction in his word; but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we, after all, content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God hath opened a very large treasure before us, for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us so much; if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to acquire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time, the canon of Scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain

with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligently we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divinity, without coming to an end. None have this excuse to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they know all already; nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. Here is room enough to employ ourselves forever in this divine science, with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest, and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection; especially the work of redemption, which is that work of God about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The Psalmist found an end to the things that are human; but he could never find an end to what is contained in the word of God; Psalm 119:96, "I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns every one to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in any thing or in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his high calling, Phil.3:14. This is the business, and, if I may so speak, the trade of a Christian, his main work, and indeed should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Christian should endeavor to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this

work, that he may fulfill it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a soldier, and to go a warfare, to endeavor to excel in the art of war. It becomes one who is called to be a mariner, and to spend his life in sailing the ocean, to endeavor to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes one who professes to be a physician, and devotes himself to that work, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued from this, that God hath appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He hath appointed them to be teachers. 1 Cor. 12:28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers." Eph. 4:11,12, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." If God hath set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he hath made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? Not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God hath made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow, that he hath made it the business of others to be learners; for teachers and learners are correlates, one of which was never intended to be without the other. God hath never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He hath not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament is disciples, the signification of which word is scholars or learners. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God hath in the Scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be enriched with all knowledge: 1 Cor.1:4-5, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge: Philip. 1:9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." So the Apostle Peter advises to "give all diligence, to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," 2 Pet. 1:5. And the Apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were indoctrinated when they were first baptized, and had the apostle's hands laid on them, at their first initiation in Christianity. See Heb. 6, at the beginning.

Application

The use that I would make of this doctrine is, to exhort all diligently to endeavor to gain this kind of knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ, and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation. So you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz., going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession.-- Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little

pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and as you receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or as you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those that are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is especially proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves these long winter evenings. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time that is spent in our winter evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. 10:19, "That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin." And is not this verified in those who find nothing else to do for so great a part of the winter, but to go to one another's houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one's present disposition happens to suggest? Some

diversion is doubtless lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: Prov. 14:23, "In all labor there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury!" Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do but to sit, and talk, and chat in one another's chimney corners, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbors; not considering what Christ hath said, Matt. 12:36, "Of every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to spend your winters in, one winter after another, besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which they would both be more out of the devil's way, the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in after they are become incapable of bodily labor. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would, with both profit and pleasure, be engaged in searching the Scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time. The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things ere so." This is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. 1:12, "Which things the angels desire to look into." This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as

you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Prov. 25:2, "It is the honor of kings to search out a matter;" and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now if this be the honor even of kings, is it not equally, if not much more, your honor?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labor necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. "When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul," Prov. 2:10.

4. This knowledge is exceeding useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; for no means of grace, as was said before, have their effect on the heart, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The Heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes the advantage of persons' ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them. By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honor of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet, for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according

to knowledge, Rom. 10:2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge.

Besides, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbors: and so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much knowledge in divinity now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of Scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more of divinity, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke 10:23,24, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the principles which we hold in divinity. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. if therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Besides, the Apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, always to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without a considerable knowledge in divine things.

I shall now conclude my discourse with some directions for the acquisition of this knowledge.

1. Be assiduous in reading the holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the Scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one Scripture with another. For the Scripture, by the harmony of the different parts of it, casts great light upon itself. We are expressly directed by Christ to search the Scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the Scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a Scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on Sabbath days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each other's knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and

ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice. If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. 8:1, "Knowledge puffeth up."

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, James 1:5: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." God is the fountain of all divine knowledge. Prov. 2:6, "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Labor to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge. 1 Cor. 3:18, "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

8. (sic) Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more. The Psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divinity, from his own experience: Psalm 119:100, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Christ also recommends the same: John 7:17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

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Love, the Sum of All Virtue

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, ant have not charity, I am become as counting brass, or & tinkling cymbal Ant though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; ant though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow stow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profited me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:13

In these words we observe First, that something is spoken of as of special importance, and as peculiarly essential in Christians, which the apostle calls CHARITY. And this charity, we find, is abundantly insisted on in the New Testament by Christ and his apostles,-more insisted on, indeed, than any other virtue.

But, then, the word "charity," as used in the New Testament, is of much more extensive signification than as it is used generally in common discourse. What persons very often mean by " charity," in their ordinary conversation, is a disposition to hope and think the best of others, and to put a good construction on their words and behaviour; and sometimes the word is used for a disposition to give to the poor. But these things are only certain particular branches, or fruits of that great virtue of charity which is so much insisted on throughout the New Testament. The word properly signifies *or that disposition or affection whereby one is dear to another;* and the original (agape) which is here translated "*charity,"* might better have been rendered *" love,"* for that is the proper English of it: so that by charity, in the New Testament, is meant the very same thing as Christian love; and though it be more frequently used for love to men, yet sometimes it is used to signify not only love to men, but love to God. So it is manifestly used by the apostle in this Epistle, as he explains himself in chapter viii. 1- " knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth," &c. Here the comparison is between knowledge and charity and the preference is given to charity, because knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And then, in the nest two verses, it is more particularly explained how knowledge usually puffs up, and why charity edifieth; so that what is called *charity* in the first verse, is called *loving* God in the third, for the very same thing is evidently spoken of in the two places. And doubtless the apostle means the same thing by charity in this thirteenth chapter,

that he does in the eighth; for he is here comparing the same two things together that he was there, viz. knowledge and charity. "Though I have all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing and again, " charity never faileth, but knowledge, it shall vanish away." So that by *charity* here, We are doubtless to understand *Christian love* in its full extent, and whether it be exercised towards God or our fellowcreatures.

And this charity is here spoken of as that which is, m a distinguishing manner, the great and essential thing: which will appear more fully when we observe,

Secondly, what things are mentioned as being in vain without it, viz. the most excellent things that ever belong to natural men; the most excellent privileges, and the most excellent performances. First, the most excellent privileges, such as preaching with tongues, the gift of prophecy, understanding all mysteries, faith to remove mountains, &c.; and secondly, the most excellent performances, such as giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and the body to be burned, &c. Greater things than these, no natural man ever had or did, and they are the kind of things in which men are exceedingly prone to trust; and yet the apostle declares that if we have them all, and have not charity, we are nothing. The doctrine taught, then, is this:

THAT ALL THE VIRTUE THAT IS SAVING, AND THAT DISTINGUISHES TRUE CHRISTIANS FROM OTHERS, IS SUMMED UP IN CHRISTIAN LOVE. This appears from the words of the text, because so many other things are mentioned that natural men may have, and the things mentioned are of the highest kind it is possible they should have, both of privilege and performance, and yet it is said they avail nothing without this; whereas, if any of them were saving, they would avail something without it.

And by the apostle's mentioning so many and so high things, and then saying of them all, that they profited nothing without charity, we may justly conclude, that there is nothing at all that avails anything without it. Let a man have what he will, and do what he will, it signifies nothing without charity; which surely implies that charity is the great thing, and that everything which has not charity in some way contained or implied

in it, is nothing, and that this charity is the life and soul of all religion, without which all things that wear the name of virtues are empty and vain.

In 6peaking to this doctrine, I would first notice the nature of this divine love, and then shew the truth of the doctrine respecting it. And

I. *I would speak of the nature of a truly Christian love.* And here 1 would observe,

1. That all true Christian love is one and the same in it's principle. It may be various in its forms and objects, and may be exercised either toward God or men, but it is the same principle in the heart that is the foundation of every exercise of a truly Christian love, whatever may be its object. It is not with the holy love in the heart of the Christian, as it is with the love of other men. Their love toward different objects, may be from different principles and motives, and with different views; but a truly Christian love is different from this. It is one as to its principle, whatever the object about which it is exercised; it is from the same spring or fountain in the heart, though it may flow out in different channels and diverse directions, and therefore it is all fitly comprehended in the one name of charity, as in the text. That this Christian love is one, whatever the objects toward which it may flow forth, appears by the following things:-

First, It is all from *the same Spirit* influencing the heart. It is from the breathing of the same Spirit that true Christian love arises, both toward God and man. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of love, and when the former enters the soul, love also enters with it. God is love, and he that has God dwelling in him by his Spirit, will have love dwelling in him also. The nature of the Holy Spirit is love; and it is by communicating

himself, in his own nature, to the saints, that their hearts are filled with divine charity. Hence we find that the saints are partakers of the divine nature, and Christian love is called the " love of the Spirit " (Rom. xv. 30), and " love in the Spirit,, (Col i. 8), and the very bowels of love and mercy seem to signify the same thing with the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. ii. 1). It is that Spirit, too, that infuses love to God (Rom. v. 5); and it is by the

indwelling of that Spirit, that the soul abides in love to God and man (1 John iii. 23, 24; and iv. 12, 13). And,

Second, Christian love, both to God and man, is *wrought in the heart by the same work of the Spirit*. There are not two works of the Spirit of God, one to infuse a spirit of love to God, and tile other to infuse a spirit of love to men; but in producing one, the Spirit produces the other also. In the work of conversion, the Holy Spirit renews the heart by giving it a divine temper (Eph. iv. 23); and it is one and the same divine temper thus wrought in the heart, that flows out in love both to God and man. And,

Third, When God and man are loved with a truly Christian love, they are both loved from *the same motives*. When God is loved a right, he is loved for his excellency, and the beauty of his nature, especially the holiness of his nature; and it is from the same motive that the saints are loved for holiness" sake. And all things that are loved with a truly holy love, are loved from the same respect to God. Love to God is the foundation of gracious love to men; and men are loved, either because they are in some respect like God, in the possession of his nature and spiritual image, or because of the relation they stand in to him as his children or creatures as those who are blessed of him, or to whom his mercy is offered red, or in some other way from regard to him. Only remarking, that though Christian love be one in its principle, yet it is distinguished and variously denominated in two ways, with respect to its objects, and the kinds of its exercise; as, for example, its degrees, &c. I now proceed,

I . *To shew the truth of the doctrine, that all virtue that is saving, or distinguishing of true Christians, is summed 71p in Christian love*. And,

1. We may argue this from what reason teaches of the nature of love. And if we duly consider its nature, two things will appear-

First, That love will *dispose to all proper act' of respect to troth God and man*. This is evident, because a true respect to either God or man consuls in love. If a man sincerely loves God it will dispose him to render all proper respect to him; and men need no other incitement to shew each other all the respect that is due, than love. Love to God will dispose a man to honour him, to worship and adore him, and heartily to acknowledge

his greatness and glory and dominion. And so it will dispose to all acts of obedience to God; for the servant that loves his master, and the subject that loves his sovereign, will be disposed to proper subjection and obedience. Love will dispose the Christian to behave toward God, as a child to a father; amid difficulties, to resort to him for help, and put all his trust in him; just as it is natural for us, in case of need or affliction, to go to one that we love for pity and help. It will lead us, too, to give credit to his word, and to put confidence in him; for v. e are not apt to suspect the veracity of those we have entire friendship for. It will dispose us to praise God for the mercies we receive from him, just as we are disposed to gratitude for any kindness we receive from our {allowmen that we love. Love, again, will dispose our hearts to submission to the will of God, for we are more willing that the will of those we love should be done, than of others. We naturally desire that those we love should be suited, and that we should be agreeable to them; and true affection and love to God will dispose the heart to acknowledge God's right to govern, and that he is worthy to do it, and so will dispose to submission. Love to God will dispose us to walk humbly with him, for he that loves God will be disposed to acknowledge the vast distance between God and himself. It will be agreeable to such an one, to exalt God, and set him on high above all, and to lie low before him. A true Christian delights to have God exalted on his own abasement, because he loves him. He is willing to own that God is worthy of this, and it is with delight that he casts himself in the dust before the Most High, from his sincere love to him.

And so a due consideration of the nature of love will shew that it disposes men to all duties towards their neighbours. If men have a sincere love to their neighbours, it will dispose them to all acts of justice towards those neighbours-for real love and friendship always dispose us to give those we love their due, and never to wrong them (Rom. xiii. 10)-" Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." And the same love will dispose to truth toward neighbours, and will tend to prevent all lying and fraud and deceit. Men are not disposed to exercise fraud and treachery toward those they love; for thus to treat men is to treat them like enemies, but love destroys enmity. Thus the apostle makes use of the oneness that there ought to be among Christians, as an argument to induce them to truth between man and man (Eph. iv. 25). Love will dispose to walk humbly

amongst men; for a real and true love will incline us to high thoughts of others, and to think them better than ourselves. It will dispose men to honour one another, for all are naturally inclined to think highly of those they love, and to give them honour; so that by love are fulfilled those precepts, 1 Pet. xi. 17- " Honour all men,', and Phil. ii. 3 " Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Love will dispose to contentment in the sphere in which God hath placed US, without. coveting any things that our neighbor possesses, or envying him on account of any good thing that he has. It will dispose men to meekness and gentleness in their carriage toward their neighbours, and not to treat them with passion or violence or heat of spirit, but with moderation and calmness and kindness. It will check and restrain everything like a bitter spirit; for love has no bitterness in it, but is a gentle and sweet disposition and affection of the soul. It will prevent broils and quarrels, and will dispose men to peaceableness, and to forgive injurious treatment received from others; as it is said in Proverbs x. 12, " Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins."

Love will dispose men to all acts of mercy toward their neighbours when they are under any affliction or calamity, for we are naturally disposed to pity those that we love, when they are afflicted. It will dispose men to give to the poor, to bear one another's burdens, and to weep with those that weep, as well as to rejoice with those that do rejoice. It will dispose men to the duties they owe to one another in their several places and relations. It will dispose a people to all the duties they owe to their rulers, and to give them all that honour and subjection which are their due. And it will dispose rulers to rule the people over whom they are set, justly, seriously, and faithfully, seeking their good, and not any byends of their own. It will dispose a people to all proper duty to their ministers, to hearken to their counsels and instructions, and to submit to them in the house of God, and to support and sympathize with and pray for them, as those that watch for their souls; and it will dispose ministers faithfully and ceaselessly to seek the good of the souls of their people, watching for them as those that must give account. Love e will dispose to suitable carriage between superiors and inferiors: it will ill dispose children to honour their parents, and servants to be obedient to their masters, not with eyeservice, but in singleness of heart; and it will dispose masters to

exercise gentleness and goodness toward their servants.

Thus love would dispose to all duties, both toward God and toward man. And if it will thus dispose to all duties, then it follows, that it is the root, and spring, and, as it were, a comprehension of all virtues. It is a principle which, if it be implanted in the heart, is alone sufficient to produce all good practice; and every right disposition toward God and man is summed up in it, and comes from it, as the fruit from tile tree, or the stream from the fountain.

Second, Reason teaches that *whatever performances or seeming virtues there are without love, are unsound and hypocritical.* If there be no love in what men do, then

there is no true respect to God or men in their conduct; and if so, then certainly there is no sincerity. Religion is nothing without proper respect to God. The very notion of religion among mankind is, that it is the creature's exercise and expression of such respect toward the Creator. But if there be no true respect or love, then all that is called religion is but a seeing show, and there is no real religion in it, but it is unreal and vain. Thus, if a man's faith be of such a sort that there is no true respect to God in it, reason teaches that it must be in vain; for if there be no love to God in it, there car. he no true respect to him From this it appears, that love is always contained in a true and living faith, and that it is its true and proper life and soul, without which, faith is as dead as the e body is without its soul; and that it is that which especially distinguishes a living faith from every other: but of this more particularly hereafter. Without love to God, again, there can be no true honour to him. A man is never hearty in the honour he seems to render to another whom he does not love; so that all the seeming honour or worship that is ever paid without love, is but hypocritical. And so reason teaches, that there is no sincerity in the obedience that is performed without love; for if there be no love, nothing that at is done can be spontaneous and free, but all must be forced. So without love, there can be no hearty submission to the will of God, and there can be no real and cordial trust and confidence in him. He that does not love God will not trust him: he never will, with true acquiescence of soul, cast himself into the hands of God, or into the arms of his mercy.

And so, whatever good carriage there may be in men toward their neighbours, yet reason teaches that it is all unacceptable and in vain, if at the same time there be no real respect in the heart toward those neighbours; if the outward conduct is not prompted by inward love. And from these two things taken together, viz. that love is of such a nature that it will produce all virtues, and dispose to all duties to God and men, and that without it there can be no sincere virtue, and no duty at all properly performed, the truth of the doctrine follows-that all true and distinguishing Christian virtue and grace may be summed up in love.

2. The Scriptures teach us that love is the sum of all that is contained in the law of God, and of all the duties required in his word. This the Scriptures teach of the law in general, and of each table of the law in particular.

First, The Scriptures teach this *of the law and word of God in general. By* the law, in the Scriptures, is sometimes meant the whole of the written word of God, as in John x. 34-" Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods ? " And sometimes, by tile law, is meant the five books of Moses, as in Acts xxiv. 14, where it is named with the distinction of the " law " and the " prophets." And sometimes, by the law, is meant the ten commandments, as containing the sum of all the duty of mankind, and all that is required as of universal and perpetual obligation. But whether we take the law as signifying only the ten commandments, or as including the whole written word of God, the Scriptures teach us that the sum of all that is required in it is love. Thus, when by the law is meant the ten commandments, it is said, in Rom. xiii. 8, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;" and therefore several of the commandments are rehearsed, and it is added, in the tenth verse' that " love " (which leads us to obey them all) "is the fulfilling of the law." Now, unless love was the *Sum* of what the law requires, the law could not be wholly fulfilled in love; for a law is fulfilled only by obedience to the sum or whole of what it contains and enjoins. So the same apostle again declares (1 Tim. i. 5), "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," &c. Or if we take the law in a yet more extensive sense, as the whole written word of God, the Scriptures still teach us, that love is the sum of all required in it. In Matt. xxii. 40,

Christ teaches, that on the two precepts of loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, hang all the law and the prophets, *i.e.* all the written word of God; for what was then called the law and the prophets, was the whole written word of God that was then extant. And,

Second, The Scriptures teach the same thing *of each table of the law in particular*. The command, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,', is declared by Christ (Matt. xxii. 38) to be the sum of the first table of the law, or the first great commandment; and in the next verse, to love our neighbour as ourself, is declared to be the sum of the second table; as it is also in Rom. xiii. 9, where the precepts of the second table of the law are particularly specified: and it is then added, " And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And 60 in Gal. v. 14- ``For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the same seems to be stated in James

ii. 8, '`If ye fulfill the royal law, according to the Scripture sure, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." Hence love appears to be the *sum* of all the virtue and duty that God requires of us, and therefore must undoubtedly be the most essential thing-the sum of all the virtue that is essential and distinguishing in real Christianity. That which is the sum of all duty, must be the sum of all real virtue.

3. The truth of the doctrine' as shewn by the Scripture appears from this, that the apostle teaches us (Gal. v. 6) that "faith works by love." A truly Christian faith is that which produces good works; but all the good works which it produces are by love. By this, two things are evident to the present purpose:-

First, That true love 28 *an ingredient in true and living faith, and is what is most essential and distinguishing in it.* Love is no ingredient in a merely speculative faith, but it is the life and soul of a practical faith. A truly practical or saving faith, is light and heat together, or rather light and love, while that which is only a speculative faith, is only light without heat; and, in that it wants spiritual heat or divine love, is in vain, and good for nothing. A speculative faith consists only in the ascent of the understanding; but in a saving faith there is also the consent of the heart;

and that faith which is only of the former kind, is no better than the faith of devils, for they have faith so far as it can exist without love, believing while they tremble. Now, the true spiritual consent of the heart cannot be distinguished from the love of the heart. He whose heart consents to Christ as a Saviour, has true love to him as such. For the heart sincerely to consent to the way of salvation by Christ, cannot be distinguished from loving that way of salvation, and resting in it. There is an act of choice or election in true saving faith, whereby the soul chooses Christ its Saviour and portion, and accepts of and embraces him as such; but, as was observed before, an election or choice whereby it so chooses God and Christ, is an act of love-the lore of a soul embracing him as its dearest friend and portion Faith is a duty that God requires of every one. We are commanded to believe, and unbelief is a sin forbidden by God. Faith is a duty required in the first table of the law, and in the first command of that table; and therefore it will follow, that it is comprehended in the great commandment, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,', &c. and so it will follow that love is the most essential thing in a true faith. That love is the very life and spirit of a true faith, is especially evident from a comparison of this declaration of the apostle, that " faith works by love," and the last verse of the second chapter of the epistle of James, which declares, that " as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." The working active, and acting nature of anything, is the life of it; and that which makes us call a thing alive, is, that we observe an active nature in it. This active, working nature in man, is the spirit which he has within him. And as his body without this spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. And if we would know what the working active thing in true faith is, the apostle tells us in Gal v. 6, "Faith worketh by love." So that it is love which is the active working spirit in all true faith. This is its very soul, without which it ; is dead as, in another form, he tells in the text, saying that faith, without charity or love is nothing, though it be to such a degree that it can remove mountains. And when he says, in the seventh verse of the context, that charity " believeth all things, and hopeth all things," he probably refers to the great virtues of believing and hoping in the truth and grace of God, to which he compares charity in other parts of the chapter, and particularly in the last verse, " Now abideth faith, hope, charity,,' &c. For in the seventh verse he gives the preference to charity or love, before the other virtues of faith

and hope, because it includes them; for he says, "charity believeth all things, and hopeth all things; " so that this seems to be his meaning, and not merely, as it is vulgarly understood, that charity believeth and hopeth the best with regard to our neighbours. That a justifying faith, as a most distinguishing mark of Christianity, is comprehended in the great command of loving God, appears also, very plainly, from what Christ says to the Jews (John v. 4043, &c.)

Second, It is further manifest from this declaration of the apostle " that faith works by love," *that all Christian* exercises *of the heart, and words of the life, are from love;* for we are abundantly taught in the New Testament that all Christian holiness begins with faith in Jesus Christ. All Christian obedience is, in the Scriptures called the obedience of faith; as in Rom. xvi. 26, the gospel is said to be "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith " The obedience here spoken of is doubtless the same with that spoken of in the eighteenth verse of the preceding chapter, where Paul speaks of making " the Gentiles obedient by word and deed." And in Gal. ii. 20, he tells us, "the life which I now dive in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,' &c.; and we are often told that Christians, so far as they are Christians, '`live by faith; " which is equivalent to saying that all gracious and holy exercises and virtues of the spiritual life are by faith. But how does faith work these things ? Why, in this place in Galatians, it is expressly said, that it works whatsoever it does work by *love*. From which the truth of the doctrine follows, viz. that all that is saving and distinguishing in Christianity does radically consist, and is summarily comprehended, in love.

In the application of this subject, we may use it in the way of selfexamination, instruction, and exhortation. And,

1. In view of it let us examine ourselves, and see if we have the spirit which it enjoins. From love to God springs love to man, as says the apostle (1 John v. 1) Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Have we this love to all who are the children of God ? This love also leads those who possess it to rejoice in God, and to worship and magnify him. Heaven is made up of such (Rev. xv. 24) "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the

victory over the least, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Do we thus delight in God, and rejoice in l is worship, and in magnifying his holy name ? This love also leads those who possess it, sincerely to desire, and earnestly to endeavour to do good to their fellowmen (1 John iii. 1619) "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." Is this spirit, which dwelt in Jesus Christ, tile spirit that reigns in our hearts, and is seen in our daily life ? The subject may, also, be of use,

2. In the way of instruction. And,

First, This doctrine shews us *what is the right Christian spirit* When the disciples, on their way to Jerusalem, desired Christ to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans who would not receive him, he told them (Luke ix. 55), by way of rebuke, " Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;', by which we are to understand, not that they did not know their own hearts, but that they did not know and truly feel what kind of spirit was proper and becoming to their character and spirit as his professed disciples, and becoming that evangelical dispensation that he had come to establish, and under which they were now living. It might indeed be, and doubtless was true, that in many respects they did not know their own hearts. But what Christ here referred to was, not the want of selfknowledge in general, but the particular spirit they had manifested in desiring him call down fire, &c., -a desire which showed notso much that they did not know what their own hearts or dispositions were, as that they did not seem to know what kind of spirit and temper was proper to

the Christian dispensation that was henceforth to be established, and to the Christian character of which they were to be examples. They showed their ignorance of the true nature of Christ's kingdom; that it was to be a kingdom of love and peace; and that they did not know but that a revengeful spirit WAS a proper spirit for them as his disciples: and for this it is that he rebukes them.

And doubtless there are many nowadays, greatly to be rebuked for this, that though they have been so long in the school of Christ and under the teachings of the e gospel, yet they still remain under a great misapprehension as to what kind of a spirit a truly Christian spirit is, and what spirit is proper for the followers of Christ and the dispensation under which they live. But if we attend to the text anti its doctrine, they will teach us what this spirit is, viz. that in its very essence and savour it is the spirit of divine and Christian love. This may, by way of eminence be called *the* Christian spirit; for it is much more insisted on in the New Testament, than anything that concerns either our duty or our moral state. The words of Christ whereby he taught men their duty, and gave his counsels and commands to his disciples and others, were spent very much on the precepts of love; and as the words that proceeded out of his mouth were so full of this sweet divine virtue, he thus most manifestly commends it to us. And after his ascension, the apostles were full of the same spirit in their epistles abundantly recommending love, peace, gentleness, goodness, bowels of compassion and kindness, directing us by such things to express our love to God and to Christ, as well as to our fellowmen and especially to all that are his followers This spirit, even a spirit of love, is the spirit that God holds forth greater motives in the gospel to induce us to, than to any other thing whatever. The work of redemption which the gospel makes known, above all things affords motives to love; for that work was the most glorious and wonderful exhibition of love that ever was seen or heard of. Love is the principal thing that the gospel dwells on when speaking of God, and of Christ. It brings to light the love eternally existing between the Father and the Son, and declares how that same love has been manifested in many things, how that Christ is God's well beloved Son, in whom he is ever well pleased; flow he so loved him, that he has raised him to the throne of the mediatorial kingdom, and appointed him to be the judge of the world,

and ordained that all mankind should stand before him in judgment. In the gospel, too, is revealed the love that Christ has to the Father, and the wonderful fruits of that love, particularly in his doing such great things, and suffering such great things in obedience to the Father's w ill, and for the honour of his justice, and law, and authority, as the great moral governor. There it is revealed how the Father and Son are one in love, that we might be induced, in the like spirit, to be one with them, and with one another, agreeably to Christ's prayer in John xvii. 2123, " '[hat they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The gospel also declares to us that the love of God was from everlasting, and reminds us that he loved those that are redeemed by Christ, before the foundation of the world; and that he gave them to the Son; and that the Son loved them as his own. It reveals, too, the wonderful love of both the Father and the Son to the saints now in glory- that Christ not only loved them while in the world, but that he loved them to the end. And all this love is spoken of as bestowed on us while we were wanderers, outcasts, worthless, guilty, and even enemies. This is love, such as was never elsewhere known, or conceived (John xv. 13) " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ;" (Rom. v. 710) " Scarcely for a righteous man will one die . . . But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; . . . when we were enemies.,

God and Christ appear in the gospel revelation, as being clothed with love; as sitting as it were on a throne of mercy and grace, a seat of love, encompassed about with the sweet beams of love. Love is the light and glory that is round about the throne on which God is seated. This seems to be intended in the vision the apostle John, that loving and loved disciple, had of God in the isle of Patmos (Rev. iv. 3) "And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald;,' that is, round about the throne on which God was sitting. So that God appeared to him as he sat on his throne, as encompassed with a circle of exceeding sweet and pleasant light, like the beautiful colours of the rainbow, and

like an emerald, which is a precious stone of exceeding pleasant and beautiful colour-thus representing that the light and glory with which God appears surrounded in the gospel, is especially the glory of his love and covenantgrace, for the rainbow was given to Noah as a token of both of these. Therefore, it is plain that this spirit, even a spirit of love, is the spirit that the gospel revelation does especially hold forth motives and inducements to; and this is especially and eminently the Christian spirit-the right spirit of the gospel.

Second, If it is indeed so, that all that is saving and distinguishing in a true Christian, is summarily comprehended in love, *then professors of Christianity may in this be caught as to* their *experiences, whether they are real Christian experiences* or *not*. If they are so, then love is the sum and substance of them. If persons have the true light of heaven let into their souls, it is not a light without heat. Divine knowledge and divine love go together. A spiritual view of divine things always excites love in the soul, and dram forth the heart in love to every proper object. True discoveries of the divine character dispose us to love God as the supreme good; they unite the heart in love to Christ; they incline the soul to flow out in love to God's people, and to all mankind. When persons have a true discovery of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, this is the effect. When they experience a right belief of the truth of the gospel, such a belief is accompanied by love. They love him whom they believe to be the Christ, the Bon of the living God. When the truth of the glorious doctrines and promises of the gospel is seen, these doctrines and promises are like so many cords which take hold of the heart, and draw it out in love to God and Christ. When persons experience a true trust and reliance on Christ, they rely on him with love, and so do it with delight and sweet acquiescence of soul. The spouse sat under Christ's shadow with great delight, and rested sweetly under his protection, because she loved him (Cant. ii. 2). When persons experience true comfort and spiritual joy, their joy is the joy of faith and love. They do not rejoice in themselves, but it is God who is their exceeding joy.

Third, This doctrine shows *the amiableness of a Christian spirit*. A spirit of love is an amiable spirit. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ it is the spirit of heaven.

Fourth, This doctrine shews *the pleasantness of a Christian life*.. A life of love is a pleasant life. Reason and the Scriptures alike teach us, that " happy is the man that findeth wisdom," and that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace', (Prov. iii. 13, 17).

Fifth, Hence we may learn the reason *why contention tends so much to the ruin of religion*. The Scriptures tells us that it has this tendency-" Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James iii. 16). And 60 we find it by experience. When contention comes into a place, it seems to prevent all good. And if religion has been flourishing before, it presently seems to chill and deaden it; and everything that is bad begins to flourish. And in the light of our doctrine, we may plainly see the reason of all this; for contention is directly against that which is the very sum of all that is essential and distinguishing in true Christianity, even a spirit of love and peace. No wonder, therefore, that Christianity cannot flourish in a time of strife and contention among its professors. No wonder that religion and contention cannot live together.

Sixth, Hence, then, *what a watch and guard should Christian, keep against envy, and malice, and every kind of bitterness of spirit towards their neighbours !* For these things are the very reverse of the real essence of Christianity. And it behooves Christians, as they would not, by their practice, directly contradict their profession, to take heed to themselves in this matter. They should suppress the first beginnings of illwill and bitterness and envy; watch strictly against all occasions of such a spirit, strive and fight to the utmost against such a temper as tends that way; and avoid, as much as possible all temptations that may lead to it. A Christian should at all times keep a strong guard against everything that tends to overthrow or corrupt or undermine a spirit of love. That which hinders love to men, will hinder the exercise of love to God; for, as was observed before, the principle of a truly Christian love is one. If love is the sum of Christianity, surely those things which overthrow love are exceedingly unbecoming Christians. An envious Christian, a malicious Christian, a cold and hardhearted Christian, is the greatest absurdity and contradiction. It is as if one should speak of dark brightness, or a false truth!

Seventh, Hence it is *no wonder that Christianity so strongly requires us to love our enemies, even the worst of enemies (as* in Matt. v. 44); for love is the very temper and spirit of a Christian: it is the sum of Christianity. And if we consider what incitements thus to love our enemies we have set before us in what the Gospel reveals of the love of God and Christ to their enemies, we cannot wonder that we are required to love our enemies, and to bless them, and do good to them, and pray for them, "that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

3. Our subject exhorts us to seek a spirit of love; to grow in it more and more; and very much to abound in *the* works *of love.* If love is so great a thing in Christianity, so essential and distinguishing, yea, the very sum of all Christian virtue, then surely those that profess themselves Christians should live in love, and abound in the works of love, for no works are so becoming as those of love. If you call yourself a Christian, where are your works of love? Have you abounded, and do you abound in them? If this divine and holy principle is in you, and reigns in you, will it not appear in your life in works of love? Consider, what deeds of love have you done, Do you love God? What have you done for him, for his glory, for the advancement of his kingdom in the world! And how much have you denied yourself to promote the Redeemer's interest among men ? Do you love your fellowmen ? What have you done for them? Consider your former defects in these respects, and how becoming it is in you, as a Christian, hereafter to abound more in deeds of love. Do not make excuse that you have not opportunities to do anything for the glory of God, for the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the spiritual benefit of your neighbours. If your heart is full of love, it will find vent; you will find or make ways enough to express your love in deeds. When a fountain abounds in water, it will send forth streams. Consider that as a principle of love is the main principle in the heart of a real Christian, so the labour of love is the main business of the Christian life. Let every Christian consider these things; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things, and make you sensible what spirit it becomes you to be of, and dispose you to such an excellent, amiable, and benevolent life, as is answerable to such a spirit, that you may not love only " in word and

tongue, but in deed and in truth."

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Love More Excellent than the Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. L And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—1 Corinthians 13:1, 2

Having in the last lecture shewn that an the virtue in the saints which is distinguishing and saving may be summed up in Christian love, I would now consider what things are compared with it in the text, and to which of the two the preference is given.

The things compared together, in the text, are of two kinds: on the one hand, the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, &c., which were frequent in that age, and particularly in the church at Corinth; and on the other hand, the effect of the ordinary influences of the same Spirit, in true Christians, viz. charity, or divine love.

That was an age of miracles. It was not then, as it had been of old among the Jews, when two or three, or at most a very few in the whole nation, had the gift of prophecy: it rather seemed as if Moses's wish, recorded in Num. xi. 29, had become in a great measure fulfilled: " Would to God all the Lord's people were prophets !" Not only some certain persons of great eminence were endowed with such gifts, but they were common to all sorts, old and young, men and women; according to the prophecy of the prophet Joel, who, preaching of those days, foretold beforehand that

great event—"And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God), I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and y our young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy, Especially the church at Corinth was very eminent for such gifts. All sorts of miraculous gifts were, as is apparent from this epistle, bestowed on that church; and the number who enjoyed these gifts was not small. " To one," says the apostle, " is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; . . . but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." And so some had one gift, and some another. "But,,, says the apostle, "covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way,', i. e. something more excellent than all these gifts put together, yea, something of 80 great import ace, that all these gifts without it are no thing. For "though I speak with the tongues of men," as they did on the day of Pentecost, yea, "and of angels,, too, "and have not charity, I am become" an empty worthless thing, " as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have " not only one, but all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and can not only speak with tongues, but have " the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,,, to see into all the deep things of God by immediate inspiration; ``and though I have all faith" to work all sorts of miracles, yea, even " so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Charity, then, which is the fruit of the ordinary sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, is preferred, as being more excellent than any, yea, than all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; even Christian love, which, as has been shewn, is the sum of all saving grace. Yea, so very much is it preferred, that all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, without it, are nothing, and can profit nothing. The doctrine taught, then, is—THAT THE ORDINANCES INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WORKING THE GRACE OF CHARITY IN THE HEART, IS A MORE EXCELLENT BLESSING THAN ANY or THE EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. Here I would endeavour to sheer, first, what is meant by the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; secondly, that the

extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are indeed great privileges; and yet, thirdly, that the ordinary influence of the Spirit, working the grace of charity or love in the heart, is a more excellent lent blessing.

L *I would briefly explain what is meant are by the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit;* for the gifts and operations of the Spirit of God are, by divines, distinguished into *common* and saving, and into ordinary and *extraordinary*.

1. The gifts and operations of the Spirit of God are distinguished into those that are *common,* and those that are *saving*. By common gifts of the Spirit are meant such as are common both to the godly and the ungodly. There are certain ways in which the Spirit of God influences the minds of natural men, as well as the minds of the godly. Thus there are common convictions of sin, i c. such convictions as ungodly men may hare as well as godly. So there are common illuminations or enlightening, i c. such as are common to both godly and ungodly. So there are common religious affections common gratitude—common sorrow, and the like. But there are other gifts of the Spirit, which are peculiar to the godly, such as saving faith and lore, and all the other saving graces of the Spirit.

2. Ordinary and extraordinary.—The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, &c., are called extraordinary, because cause they are such as are not given in the ordinary course of God's providence. They are not bestowed in the way of God's ordinary providential dealing with his children, but only on extraordinary occasions, as they were bestowed on the prophets and apostles to enable them to reveal the mind and will of God before the canon of Scripture was complete, and so on the primitive Church, in order to the founding and establishing of it in the world. But since the canon of the Scripture has been completed, and the Christian Church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased. But the ordinary gifts of the Spirit are such as are continued to the Church of God throughout all ages; such gifts as are granted in conviction and conversion, and such as appertain to the building up of the saints in holiness and comfort.

It may be observed, then, that the distinction of the gifts of the Spirit into

ordinary and extraordinary, is very different from the other distinction into common and special; for some of the ordinary gifts, such as faith, hope, charity, are not common gifts. They are such gifts as God ordinarily bestows on his Church in all ages, but they are not common to the godly and the ungodly; they are peculiar to the godly. And the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are common gifts. The gifts of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, &c., although they are not ordinarily bestowed on the Christian Church, but only on extraordinary occasions, yet are not peculiar to the godly, for many ungodly men have had these gifts (Matt. vii. 22, 23) - " Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Having explained these terms, I proceed to shew - -

II. *That the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God are indeed great privileges.*—When God endows any one with a spirit of prophecy, favours him with immediate inspiration, or gives him power to work miracles, to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and the like, the privilege is great; yea, this is one of the highest kind of privileges that God ever bestows on men, next to saving grace. It is a great privilege to live in the enjoyment of the outward means of grace, and to belong to the risible Church; but to be a prophet and a worker of miracles in the Church is a much greater privilege still. It is a great privilege to hear the word which has been spoken by prophets and inspired persons; but a much greater to be a prophet, to preach the word, to be inspired by God to make known his mind and will to others. It was a great privilege that God bestowed on Moses when he called him to be a prophet, and employed him as an instrument to reveal the law to the children of Israel, and to deliver to the church so great a part of the written word of God, even the first written revelation that ever was delivered to it; and when he used him as an instrument of working so many wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness Great was the privilege that God bestowed on David, in inspiring him, and making him the penman of so great and excellent a part of his word, for the use of the Church in all ages. Great was the privilege that God bestowed on those two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, in enabling them to perform such miraculous and wonderful works. And the

privilege was very great that God bestowed on the prophet Daniel, in airing him so much of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, particularly such understanding in the visions of God. This procured him great honour among the heathen, and even in the court of the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar that great and mighty and haughty monarch, so admired Daniel for it, that he was once about to worship him as a god. He fell upon his face before him, and commanded that an oblation and sweet odours should be offered unto him (Dan. ii. 46). And Daniel was advanced to greater honour than all the wise men, the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers of Babylon, in consequence of these extraordinary gifts which God bestowed upon him. Hear how the queen speaks of him to Belshazzar (Dan. v. 11, 12) " ' There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father, light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel." This privilege was also the thing which gave Daniel honour in the Persian court (Dan. vi. 1-3) It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the Icing should hare no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the Icing thought to set him over the whole realm." By this excellent spirit was doubtless, among other things, meant the spirit of prophecy and divine inspiration for which he had been so honoured by the princes of Babylon.

It was a great privilege that Christ bestowed on the apostles, in so filling them with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, inspiring them to teach all nations, and making them as it were next to himself, and to be the twelve precious stones, that are considered as the twelve foundations of the Church (Rev. xxi. 14— " And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb;" (Eph. ii. 20) " Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." And bow highly was the apostle John favoured, when he was " in the Spirit on the Lord's day,', and had such extraordinary visions, representing the great events of God's providence towards the Church, in all ages of it, to the end of the world.

Such extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are spoken of in Scripture as very great privileges. So was the privilege that God bestowed on Moses in speaking to him by way of extraordinary miraculous revelation, as it were, "face to face." And that outpouring of the Spirit in his extraordinary gifts on the day of Pentecost, which was foretold and spoken of by the prophet Joel as a very great privilege, in those fore_cited words in Joel ii. 28, 29. And Christ speaks of the gifts of miracles and of tongues, as great privileges that he would bestow on them that should believe in him (Matt. xvi. 17, 18).

Such extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have been looked upon as a great honour. Moses and Aaron were envied in the camp because of the peculiar honour that God put upon them Ps. cvi. 16). And so Joshua was ready to envy Eldad and Medad because they prophesied in the camp (Rum. xi. 27). And when the angels themselves hale been sent to do the work of the prophets, to reveal things to come, it has set them in a very honourable point of light. Even the apostle John himself, in his great surprise, was once and again ready to fall down and worship the angel that was sent by Christ to reveal to him the future events of the Church; but the angel forbids him, acknowledging that the privilege of the Spirit of prophecy which he bad was not of himself, but that he had received it of Jesus Christ (Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 8, 9). The heathen of the city of Lystra were so astonished at the power the apostles Barnabas and Paul had, to work miracles, that they were about to offer sacrifices to them as gods (Acts xiv. 11-13). And Simon the sorcerer had a great hankering after that gift that the apostles had, of conferring the Holy Ghost by laying on their hands, and offered them money for it.

These extraordinary gifts are a great privilege, in that there is in them a conformity to Christ in his prophetical office. And the greatness of the privilege appears also in this, that though sometimes they have been bestowed on natural men, yet it has been very rarely; and commonly such

as have had them bestowed on them have been saints, yea, and the most eminent saints. Thus it was on the day of Pentecost, and thus it was in more early ages (2 Pet. i. 21) " Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." These gifts have commonly been bestowed as tokens of God's extraordinary favour and love, as it was with Daniel. He was a man *greatly beloved,* and therefore he was admitted to such a great privilege as that of having these revelations made to him (Dan. ix. 23, and x. 11-19). And the apostle John, as he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, 80 he was selected above all the other apostles to be the man to whom those great events were revealed that we have an account of in the book of Revelation. I come now,

III. *To shew, that though these are great privilege,, yet that the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God, working the grace of charity in the heart, is a far more excellent privilege than any of them:* a greater blessing than the Spirit of prophecy, or the gift of tongues, or of miracles, even to the removing of mountains; a greater blessing than all those miraculous gifts that Moses, and Elijah, and David, and the twelve apostles were endowed with. This will appear, if we consider,

1. This blessing of the saving grace of God is *a quality inherent in the nature of him that is the subject of it.*— This gift of the Spirit of God, working a truly Christian temper in the soul, and exciting gracious exercises there, confers a blessing that has its seat in the heart, a blessing that makes a man's heart or nature excellent; yea, the very excellency of the nature does consist in it. Now it is not so with respect to these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. They are excellent things, but not properly the excellency of a man's nature, for they are not things that are inherent in the nature. For instance, if a man is endowed with a gift of working miracles, this power is not anything inherent in 0a nature. It is not properly any quality of the heart and nature of the man, as true grace and holiness are; and though most commonly those that have these extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues and working miracles, have been holy persons, yet their holiness did not consist in their having these gifts. These extraordinary gifts are nothing properly inherent in the man. They are something adventitious. They arc excellent things, but not excellencies in the nature of the subject. They are like a

beautiful garment, which does not alter the nature of the man that wee" it. They are like precious jewels, with which the body may be adorned; but true grace is that whereby the very soul itself becomes as it were a precious jewel.

2. The Spirit of God communicates, himself much more in bestowing saying grace than in bestowing these extraordinary gifts. In the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost does indeed produce effects, in men, or by men; but not so as properly to communicate himself, in his own proper nature, to men. A man may have an extraordinary impulse in his mind by the Spirit of God, whereby some future thing may be revealed to him; or he may have an extraordinary vision given him, representing some future event; and yet the Spirit may not at all impart himself, in his holy nature, by that. The Spirit of God may produce effects in things in which he does not communicate himself to us. Thus the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, but not SO as to impart himself to the water. But when the Spirit, by his ordinary influences, bestows saving grace, he therein imparts himself to the soul in his own holy nature—that nature of his, on the account of which he is so often called in Scripture, the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. By his producing this effect, the Spirit becomes an indwelling vital principle in the soul, and the subject becomes spiritual, being denominated so from the Spirit of God that dwells in him, and whose nature he is partaker of. Yea, grace is, as it were the holy nature of the Spirit imparted to the soul. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as knowing things to come, or having power to work miracles, do not imply this holy nature. Not but that God, when he gives the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, is commonly wont to give the sanctifying influences of the Spirit with them; but one does not imply the other. And if God gives only extraordinary gifts, such as the gift of prophecy, of miracles, &c., these alone will never make their receiver a partaker of the Spirit, so as to become spiritual in himself, *i.e.* in his own nature.

3. That grace or holiness, which is the effect of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the &aims, is that wherein the spiritual image of God consists; and not in these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. — The spiritual image of God does not consist in having a power to work

miracles, and foretell future events, but it consists in being holy, as God is holy: in having a holy and divine principle in the heart, influencing us to holy and heavenly lives. Indeed, there is a kind of assimilation to Christ in having a. power to work miracles, for Christ had such a power, and wrought a multitude of miracles (John xiv. 12) " The works that I do shall he do also." But the moral image and likeness of Christ does much more consist in having *the same mind in us which was in Christ;* in being of the same Spirit that he was of; in being meek and lowly of heart; in baying a spirit of Christian love, and walking as Christ walked. This makes a man more like Christ than if he could work ever so many miracles.

4. That grace ace which is the effect of the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God, is a privilege which God bestows only on his own favorites and children, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are not so.—It has been observed before, that though God most commonly has chosen saints, and eminent saints, to bestow extraordinary nary gifts of the Spirit upon, yet he has not always done so; but these gifts are sometimes bestowed on others. They have been common to both the godly and the ungodly. Balaam is stigmatized in Scripture as a wicked man (2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14), and yet he had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God for a while. Saul was a wicked man, but we read, once and again, of his being *among the prophets.* Judas was one of those whom Christ sent forth to preach and work miracles: he was one of those twelve disciples of whom it is said, in Matt. x. 1, " And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." And in the next verses we are told who they were; their names are all rehearsed over, and " Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him,,, among the rest. And in ver. 8, Christ says to them, " Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." The grace of God in the heart is a gift of the Holy Ghost peculiar to the saints: it is a blessing that God reserves only for those who are the objects of his special and peculiar love. But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are what God sometimes bestows on those whom he does not love, but hates; which is a sure sign that the one is infinitely more precious and excellent than the other. That is the most precious gift, which is most of an evidence of God's love. But the

extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were, in the days of inspiration and miracles, no sure sign of the love of God. The prophets were not wont to build their persuasion of the favour and love of God on their being prophets, and having revelations; but on their being sincere saints. Thus it was with David (see Ps. xv. 1-5; xvii. 1-3; and cxix. throughout) and indeed the whole book of Psalms bears witness to this. So the apostle Paul, though he was so greatly privileged with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, was yet so far from marring these the evidences of his good estate, that he expressly declares, that without charity they are all nothing. And hence we may argue,

5. From the fruit and consequence of these two different things, that the one is infinitely more excellent than the other.—Eternal life is, by the promises of the gospel, constantly connected with the one, and never with the other. Salvation is promised to those who have the graces of the Spirit, but not to those who have merely the extraordinary gifts. Many may have these last, and yet go to hell. Judas Iscariot had them, and is gone to hell. And Christ tells us, that many who have had them, will, at the last day, be bid to depart, as workers of iniquity (Matt. vii. 22, 23). And therefore, when he promised his disciples these extraordinary gifts., he bade them rejoice, not because the devils were subject to them, but because their names were written in heaven; intimating that the one might be, and yet not the other (Luke x. 17, &c.) And this shews that the one is an infinitely greater blessing than the other, as it carries eternal life in it. For eternal life is a thing of infinite worth and value, and that must be an excellent blessing indeed that has this infallibly connected with it, and of infinitely more worth than any privilege whatsoever, which a man may possess, and yet after all go to hell.

6. Happiness itself does much more immediately and essentially consist in Christian grace, wrought by the ordinary nary influences of the Spirit, than in these extraordinary gifts.—Man's highest happiness consists in holiness, for it is by this that the reasonable creature is united to God, the fountain of all good. Happiness cloth so essentially consist in knowing, loving, and serving God, and having the holy and divine temper of soul, and the lively exercises of it, that these things will make a man l happy without anything else; but no other enjoyments or privileges

whatsoever will make a man happy without this.

7. This divine temper of soul which the fruit of the ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit, is the end of all the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost.—The gift of prophecy, of miracles, of tongues, &c., God gave for this very end, to promote the propagation and establishment of tile gospel in the world. And the end of the gospel is, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to serve the living God, i. e. to make men holy. The end of all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit is the conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints in that holiness which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost. For this, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles after Christ's ascension ; and they were enabled to speak with tongues, work miracles, &c.; and for this, very many others, in that age, were endued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost (Eph. iv. 11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists." Here the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are referred to; and the end of all is expressed in the next words, viz. " For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And what sort of *edifying* of the body of Christ this is, we learn from ver. 16— " Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in LOVE." In *love,* that is, in *charity,* the same that is spoken of in our text, for the word in the original is the same, and the same thing is meant. And so it is the same as in 1 Cor. viii. 1—" *charity edifieth ."*

But the end is always more excellent than the means: this is a maxim universally allowed; for means have no goodness in them any otherwise than as they are subordinate to the end. The end, therefore, must be considered as superior in excellency to the means.

8. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be so far from profiting without that grace which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Spirit, that they will but aggravate the condemnation of those that have there.—Doubtless Judas's condemnation was exceedingly aggravated by his having been one that had had such privileges. And some, that have had such extraordinary gifts, have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and their privileges were 3 main thing that rendered their sin the unpardonable sin; as appears from Heb. vi. 4-6,— " For it is impossible

for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have e tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Those who *fell away,* were such as apostatized from Christianity after having made a public profession of it, and received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as most Christians did in those days. They were instructed in Christianity, and, through the common influences of the Spirit, they received the word with joy, like those in Matt. xiii. 20, and withal received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit—" were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come;" spake with tongues; prophesied sled in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils; and yet, after all, openly renounced Christianity; joined to call Christ an impostor, as his murderers did; and 80 " crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." these it is that the apostle says, " It is impossible to renew them again to repentance.', Such apostates, in their renouncing Christianity, must ascribe the miraculous powers which themselves had possessed to the devil. So their case became hopeless, and their condemnation must be exceedingly aggravated. And from this it appears that saving grace is of infinitely more worth and excellence than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. And, lastly,

9. Another thing that shews the preferableness, of that caving grace which is the fruit of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, to the extraordinary gifts, i,, that one will fail, and the other will not. —Thisargument the apostle makes use of in the context, to shew that divine love *is* preferable to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit (ver. 8) " Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Divine love will remain throughout all eternity, but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will fail in time. They are only of the nature of means, and when the end is obtained they shall cease; but divine love will remain for ever. In the improvement of this subject, I remark:

(1.) If saying grace is a greater blessing than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, we may doubtless hence argue, that it is the greatest privilege and blessing that ever God bestows on any person in this world. - For these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, such as the gift of tongues, of miracles, of prophecy, &c., are the highest kind of privileges that God ever bestows on natural men, and privileges which have been very rarely bestowed on such, in any age of the world, the apostolic age excepted.

If what has been said be well considered, it will appear evident beyond all doubt, that the saving grace of God in the heart, working a holy and divine temper in the soul, is the greatest blessing that ever men receive in this world: greater than any natural gifts, greater than the greatest natural abilities, greater than any acquired endowments of mind, greater than the most universal learning, greater than any outward wealth and honour, greater than to be a king or an emperor, greater than to be taken from the sheepcote, as David was, and made king over all Israel; and all the riches and honour and magnificence of Solomon, in all his glory, are not to be compared with it.

Great was the privilege that God bestowed on the blessed virgin Mary, in granting that of her should be born the Son of God. That a person, who was infinitely more honourable than the angels, yea, who was the Creator and King of heaven and earth, the great Sovereign of the world,—that such an one should be conceived in her womb, born of her, and nursed at her breasts, was a greater privilege than for her to be the mother of the child of the greatest earthly prince that ever lived; yet even that was not so a greet a privilege as to have the grace of God in the heart; to have Christ, as it were, born in the soul, as he himself cloth expressly teach us, in Luke xi. 27, 28 " And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." And once, when some told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he thence took occasion to let them know that there was a more blessed way of being related to him than that which consisted in being his mother and brethren according to the flesh (Matt. xii. 46-50) " Who is my mother?', said he, "and who are my

brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren ! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. "

(2.) Hence these two hinds of privileges are not to be confounded, by taking things that have some appearance of an extraordinary miraculous gift of the Spirit, for sure signs of grace.—If persons at any time have some extraordinary impression made upon their minds, which they think is from God, revealing something to them that shall come to pass hereafter, this, if it were real, would argue an extraordinary- gift of the Holy Ghost, viz. the gift of prophecy; but, from what has been said, it is evident that it would be no certain sign of grace, or of anything saving; even if it were real, I say—for indeed we have no reason to look on such things, when pretended to in these days, as any other than delusion. And the fact that such impressions are made by texts of Scripture coming suddenly to the mind, alters not the case; for a text of Scripture coming to the mind, proves no more to be true than the reading of it proves. If reading any text of Scripture, at any time, and at all times, as it lies in the Bible, does not prove such a thing, then its coming suddenly to the mind does not prove it; for the Scripture speaks just the same thing at one time as it does at another. The words have the same meaning when they are read along in course, as they have when they are suddenly brought to the mind; and if any man therefore argues anything further from them, he proceeds without warrant: for their coming suddenly to the mind does not give them a new meaning, which they had not before. So, if a man thinks that he is in a good estate, because such a text of Scripture comes suddenly to his mind, if the text does not prove it as it lies in the Bible, and if it would not have proved it had he only read it as he was reading along in course, then by such a text coming to his mind, ho has no evidence that ho is in a good estate. So, if anything appears to persons as though they had ~ vision of some visible form, and heard some voice, such things are not to be taken as signs of grace; for if they are real and from God, they are not grace, for the extraordinary influence of tile Spirit, producing visions and dreams, such as the prophets of old had, are no sure signs of grace. All the fruits of the Spirit, which we are to lay weight upon as evidential of grace, are summed up in charity, or Christian love;

because this is the sum of all grace. And the only way, therefore, in which any can know their good estate, is by discerning the exercises of this divine charity in their hearts; for without charity, let men have what gifts you please, they are nothing.

(3.) If saving grace is more excellent than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, then we cannot conclude, from what the Scripture says of the glory of the latter times of the Church, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit will be granter! to men in those times.—Many have been ready to think, that in those glorious times of the Church which shall be after the calling of the Jews and the destruction of Antichrist, there will be many persons that will be inspired, and endued with a power of working miracles. But what the Scripture says concerning the glory of those times does not prove any such thing, or make it probable. For it has been strewn, that the pouring out of the Spirit of God, in his ordinary and saving operations, to fill men's hearts with a Christian and holy temper, and lead them to the exercises of the divine life, is the most glorious way of pouring out the Spirit that can be; more glorious, far more glorious, than a pouring out of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. And, therefore, the glory of those times of the Church does not require any such thing as those extraordinary gifts. Those times may be far the most glorious times of the Church that ever have been, without. them. Men's not having the gift of prophecy, of tongues, of healing, &c., as they had in the apostolic age, will not hinder those being far more glorious times than there were then, if the Spirit be poured out in greater measure in his sanctifying influences; for this, as the apostle expressly asserts, is a more excellent way (1 Cor. xii. 31). This glory is the greatest glory of the Church of Christ, and the greatest glory which Christ's Church w ill ever enjoy in any period. This is what will make the Church more like the Church in heaven, where charity or love hath a perfect reign, than any number or degree of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit could do. So that we have no reason, on this account, and perhaps not on any other, to expect that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit `sill be poured out in those glorious times which are yet to come For in those times, there is no dispensation to be introduced, and no new Bible to be given. Nor have we any reason to expect our present Scriptures are to be added to and enlarged; but rather, in the end of the sacred writings which we now have, it seems to be

intimated, that no addition is to be made till Christ comes (see Rev. xxii. 18-21).

4. What cause have they to blew God, and to live to his glory, who have received such a privilege as is implied in the influence of the Holy Spirit working saving grace in the heart.—If we do but seriously consider the state of the godly, of those who have been the subjects of this inexpressible blessing, we cannot but be astonished at the wonderful grace bestowed upon them. And the more we consider it, the more wonderful and inexpressible it will appear. When we read in the Scriptures of the great privileges conferred on the virgin Mary, and on the apostle Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven, we are ready to admire such privileges as very great. But after all, they are as nothing compared with the privilege of being like Christ, and having his love in the heart. Let those, then, that hope they have this last blessing, consider, more than they ever yet have done, how great a favour God has bestowed upon them, and how great their obligations to glorify him for the work he hath wrought in them, and to glorify Christ who hath purchased this blessing for them with his own blood, and to glorify the Holy Spirit who hath sealed it to their souls. What manner of persons ought such to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Consider, you that hope in God's mercy, how highly he hath advanced and exalted and will you not be diligent to live for him? Will you dishonour Christ so as to regard him but little, not giving him your whole heart, but going after the world, neglecting him, and his service, and his glory ? Will you not be watchful against yourselves, against a corrupt, worldly, proud disposition, that might lead you away from God who has been so kind to you, and from the Saviour who has purchased such blessings for you, at the cost of his own agonies and death ? Will you not every day make this your earnest inquiry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards met,' What could God have done more for you than he has done ? What privilege could he have bestowed, better in itself, or more worthy to engage your heart in thankfulness? And consider how you are living—how,' little you have done for him - how much you do for self—how little this divine love hath wrought in your heart to incline you to live for God and Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom. Oh, how should such as you, shew your sense of your high privileges, by the exercises of love! love

that is manifest toward God in obedience, submission, reverence, cheerfulness, joy, and hope; and toward your neighbour, in meekness, sympathy, humility, charitableness, and doing good to all as you have opportunity. Finally,

(5.) *The subject exhorts all unrenewed persons, those who are strangers to this grace, to seek this most excellent blessing for themselves.* —Consider how miserable you now are while wholly destitute of this love, far from righteousness' in love with the vanities of the world, and full of enmity against God. How will you endure when he shall deal with you according to what you are, coming forth in anger as your enemy, and executing his fierce wrath against you. Consider, too, that you are capable of this love; and Christ is able and willing to bestow it: and multitudes have obtained it and been blessed in it. God is seeking your love, and you are under unspeakable obligation to render it. The Spirit of God has been poured out wonderfully here. Multitudes have been converted. Scarcely a family has been passed by. In almost every household some have been made nobles, kings, and priests unto God, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty ! What manner of persons, then, ought all of us to be! how holy, serious, just, humble, charitable, devoted in God's service, and faithful to our fellow-men! As individuals and as a people, God has most richly blessed us, and as both individuals and a people, it becomes us to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, strewing forth the praises of him that hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. " Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

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The Greatest Performances or Sufferings in Vain without Love

Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.—1 Corinthians 13:3

In the previous verses of this chapter, the necessity and excellence of charity are set forth, as we have seen, by its preference to the greatest privileges, and the utter vanity and insignificance of these privileges without it. The privileges particularly mentioned are those that consist in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God. In this verse, things of another kind are mentioned, viz. those that are of a *moral* nature. It is declared that none of these avail anything without charity. And, particularly,

First, that our *performances* are in vain without it. Here is one of the highest kinds of external performances mentioned, viz. giving all our goods to feed the poor. Giving to the poor is a duty very much insisted on in the Word of God, and particularly under the Christian dispensation. And in the primitive times of Christianity, the circumstances of the Church were such, that persons were sometimes called to part with all they had, and give it away to others. This was partly because of the extreme necessities of those who were persecuted and in distress, and partly because the difficulties that attended being a follower of Christ, and doing the work of the gospel, were such as to call for the disciples disentangling themselves from the care and burden of their worldly possessions, and going forth, as it were, without gold or silver in their purses, or scrip, or even two coats apiece. The apostle Paul tells us that he had suffered the loss of all things for Christ; and the primitive Christians, in the church at Jerusalem, sold all that they had, and gave it into a common fund, and "none said that aught that he had was his own" (Acts 4:32). The duty of giving to the poor was a duty that the Christian Corinthians at this time had particular occasion to consider, not only because of the many troubles of the times, but by reason, also, of a great dearth or famine that sorely distressed the brethren in Judea: in view of

which, the apostle had already urged it on the Corinthians, as their duty, to send relief to them, speaking of it particularly in this epistle, in the sixteenth chapter; and also in his second epistle to the same church, in the eighth and ninth chapters. And yet, though he says so much in both these epistles, to stir them up to the duty of giving to the poor, still he is very careful to inform them, that though they should go ever so far in it, yea, though they should bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it would profit them nothing.

Secondly, the apostle teaches, that not only our performances, but also our *sufferings* are of no avail without charity. Men are ready to make much of what they *do,* but more of what they *suffer*. They are ready to think it a great thing when they put themselves out of their way, or are at great expense or suffering, for their religion. The apostle here mentions a suffering of the most extreme kind, suffering even to death, and that one of the most terrible forms of death, and says that even this is nothing without charity. When a man has given away all his goods, he has nothing else remaining that he can give, but himself. And the apostle teaches, that when a man has given all his possessions, if he then goes on to give his own body, and that to be utterly consumed in the flames, it will avail nothing, if it is not done from sincere love in the heart. The time when the apostle wrote to the Corinthians was a time when Christians were often called, not only to give their goods, but their bodies also, for Christ's sake. For the Church then was generally under persecution, and multitudes were then or soon after put to very cruel deaths for the gospel's sake. But though they suffered in life, or endured the most agonizing death, it would be in vain without charity. What is meant by this charity, has already been explained in the former lectures on these verses, in which it has been shown that charity is the sum of all that is distinguishing in the religion of the heart.

And therefore the doctrine that I would derive from these words is this: THAT ALL THAT MEN CAN DO, AND ALL THAT THEY CAN SUFFER, CAN NEVER MAKE UP FOR THE WANT OF SINCERE CHRISTIAN LOVE IN THE HEART.

I. *There may be great performance, and so there may be great sufferings, without sincere Christian love in the heart*. And,

1. There may be great *performances* without it. The apostle Paul, in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, tells us what things he did before his conversion, and while he remained a Pharisee. In the fourth verse, he says, “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.” Many of the Pharisees did great things, and abounded in religions performances. The Pharisee mentioned in Luke 18:11, 12, boasted of the great things that he had done, both towards God and men, and thanked God that he so exceeded other men in his doings. And many of the heathen have been eminent for their great performances: some for their integrity, or for their justice, and others for their great deeds done for the public good. Many men, without any sincerity of love in their hearts, have been exceeding magnificent in their gifts for pious and charitable uses, and have thus gotten to themselves great fame, and had their names handed down in history to posterity with great glory. Many have done great things from fear of hell, hoping thereby to appease the Deity and make atonement for their sins, and many have done great things from pride, and from a desire for reputation and honor among men. And though these motives are not wont to influence men to a constant and universal observance of God’s commands, and to go on with a course of Christian performances, and with the practice of all duties towards God and man through life, yet it is hard to say how far such natural principles may carry men in particular duties and performances. And so,

2. There may be great *sufferings* for religion, and yet no sincerity of love in the heart. Persons may undergo great sufferings in life, just as some of the Pharisees used themselves to great severities, and to penances and voluntary inflictions. Many have undertaken wearisome pilgrimages and have shut themselves out from the benefits and pleasures of the society of mankind, or have spent their lives in deserts and solitudes, and some have suffered death, of whom we have no reason to think they had any sincere love to God in their hearts. Multitudes among the Papists have voluntarily gone and ventured their lives in bloody wars, in hopes of meriting heaven by it. In the wars carried on with the Turks and Saracens, called the Holy Wars, or Crusades, thousands went voluntarily to all the dangers of the conflict, in the hope of thus securing the pardon

of their sins and the rewards of glory hereafter. Many thousands, yea, some millions, in this way lost their lives, even to the depopulation, in a considerable measure, of many parts of Europe. And the Turks were many of them enraged by this exceedingly, so as to venture their lives, and rush, as it were, upon the very points of the swords of their enemies, because Mahomet has promised that all that die in war, in defense of the Mahometan faith, shall go at once to Paradise. And history tells us of some that have yielded themselves to voluntary death, out of mere obstinacy and sturdiness of spirit, rather than yield to the demand of others, when they might, without dishonor, have saved their lives. Many among the heathen have died for their country, and many as martyrs for a false faith, though not in anywise in such numbers, nor in such a manner, as those that have died as martyrs for the true religion. And in all these cases, many doubtless have endured their sufferings, or met death, without having any sincere divine love in their hearts, But,

II. *Whatever men may do or suffer, they cannot, by all their performances and sufferings, make up for the want of sincere love in the heart.* — If they lay themselves out ever so much in the things of religion and are ever so much engaged in acts of justice and kindness and devotion, and if their prayers and fastings are ever so much multiplied, or if they should spend their time ever so much in the forms of religious worship, giving days and nights to it, and denying sleep to their eyes and slumber to their eyelids that they might be the more laborious in religious exercises, and if the things that they should do in religion were such as to get them a name throughout the world and make them famous to all future generations, it would all be in vain without sincere love to God in the heart. And so if a man should give most bounteously to religious or charitable uses, and if, possessing the riches of a kingdom, he should give it all, and from the splendor of an earthly prince should reduce himself to a level of beggars, and if he should not stop there, but when he had done all this, should yield himself to undergo the fiercest sufferings, giving up not only all his possessions, but also giving his body to be clothed in rags, or to be mangled and burned and tormented as much as the wit of man could conceive, all, even all this, would not make up for the want of

sincere love to God in the heart. And it is plain that it would not, for the following reasons: —

1. *It is not the external work done, or the suffering endured, that is, in itself, worth anything in the sight of God.* — The motions and exercise of the body, or anything that may be done by it, if considered separately from the heart — the inward part of the man — is of no more consequence or worth in the sight of God than the motions of anything without life. If anything be offered or given, though it be silver, or gold, or the cattle on a thousand hills, though it be a thousand rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, there is nothing of value in it, as an external thing, in God's sight. If God were in need of these things, they might be of value to him in themselves considered, independently of the motives of the heart that led to their being offered. We often stand in need of external good things, and therefore such things, offered or given to us, may and do have a value to us, in themselves considered. But God stands in need of nothing. He is all-sufficient in himself. He is not fed by the sacrifices of beasts, nor enriched by the gift of silver, or gold, or pearls — "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psa. 50:10, 12.) "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own" (1 Chr. 29:14, 16). And as there is nothing profitable to God in any of our services or performances, so there can be nothing acceptable in his sight in a mere external action without sincere love in the heart, "for the Lord seeth not as men seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." The heart is just as naked and open to him as the external actions. And therefore he sees our actions, and all our conduct, not merely as the external motions of a machine, but as the actions of rational, intelligent creatures, and voluntary free agents; and therefore there can be, in his estimation, no excellence or amiableness in anything we can do, if the heart be not right with him.

And so God takes no pleasure in any sufferings that we may endure, in themselves considered. He is not profited by the torments men may undergo, nor does he delight to see them putting themselves to suffering,

unless it he from some good motive, or to some good purpose and end. We sometimes may need that our fellowmen, our friends and neighbors, should suffer for us, and should help us to bear our burdens, and put themselves to inconvenience for our sake. But God stands in no such need of us, and therefore our sufferings are not acceptable to him, considered merely as sufferings endured by us, and are of no account apart from the motive that leads us to endure them. No matter what may be done or suffered, neither doings nor sufferings will make up for the want of love to God in the soul. They are not profitable to God, nor lovely for their own sake in his sight. Nor can they ever make up for the absence of that love to God and love to men, which is the sum of all that God requires of his moral creatures.

2. *Whatever is done or suffered, yet if the heart is withheld from God, there is nothing really given to him.* — The act of the individual, in what he does or suffers, is in every case looked upon, not as the act of a lifeless engine or machine, but as the act of an intelligent, voluntary, moral being. For surely a machine is not properly capable of giving anything; and if any such machine that is without life, being moved by springs or weights, places anything before us, it cannot properly be said to give it to us. Harps and cymbals, and other instruments of music, were of old made use of in praising God in the temple and elsewhere. But these lifeless instruments could not be said to give praise to God, because they had no thought, nor understanding, or will, or heart, to give value to their pleasant sounds. And so, though a man has a heart, and an understanding, and a will, yet if when he gives anything to God, he gives it without his heart, there is no more truly given to God than is given by the instrument of music.

He that has no sincerity in his heart, has no real respect to God in what he seems to give, or in all his performances or sufferings, and therefore God is not his great end in what he does or gives. What is given, is given to that which the individual makes his great end in giving. If his end be only himself, then it is given only to himself. and not to God. If his aim be his own honor or ease, or worldly profit, then the gift is but an offering to these things. The gift is an offering to him to whom the giver's heart devotes, and for whom he designs it. It is the aim of the heart that makes

the reality of the gift. And if the sincere aim of the heart be not to God, then there is in reality nothing given to him, no matter what is performed or suffered. So that it would be a great absurdity to suppose that anything that can be offered or given to God, can make up for the absence of love in the heart to him. For without this, nothing is truly given, and the seeming gift is but mockery of the Most High. This further appears,

3. *From the fact, that this love or charity is the sum of all that God requires of us*. And it is absurd to suppose that anything can make up for the want of that which is the sum of *all* that God requires. Charity or love is something that has its seat in the heart, and in which, as we have seen, consists all that is saving and distinguishing in Christian character. This love it is of which our Savior speaks as the sum of all required in the two tables of the law, and which the apostle declares is the fulfilling of the law. How can we make up for the defect, when, by withholding it, we do in effect withhold the sum-total of all that God requires of us? It would be absurd to suppose that we can make up for one thing that is required by offering another that is required — that we can make up for one debt by paying another. But it is still more absurd to suppose that we can make up for the whole debt without paying anything, but by continuing still to withhold all that is required. As to external things without the heart, God speaks of them as not being the things that he has required (Isa. 1:12), and demands that the heart be given to him, if we would have the external offering accepted.

4. *If we make a great show of respect and love to God, in the outward actions, while there is no sincerity in the heart, it is but hypocrisy and practical lying unto the Holy One.* — To pretend to such respect and love, when it is not felt in the heart, is to act as if we thought we could deceive God. It is to do as Israel did in the desert, after they had been delivered from Egypt, when they are said to have "lied unto God with their mouth, and to have flattered him with their tongues" (Psa. 78:36). But surely it is as absurd to suppose that we can make up for the want of sincere respect by flattery and guile, as to suppose we can make up for the want of truth by falsehood and lying.

5. *Whatever may be done or suffered, if there be no sincerity in the heart, it is all but an offering to some idol.* — As observed before, there is

nothing, in the case supposed, really offered to God, and therefore it will follow, that it is offered to some other being, or object, or end, and whatever that may be, it is what the Scriptures call an idol. In all such offerings, something is virtually worshipped; and whatever it is, be itself, or our fellowmen, or the world, *that* is allowed to usurp the place that should be given to God, and to receive the offerings that should be made to him. And how absurd to suppose we can make up for withholding from God that which is his due, by offering something to our idol! It is as absurd as it is to suppose that the wife can make up for want of love to her husband, by giving that affection which is due to him to another man who is a stranger; or that she can make up for her want of faithfulness to him, by the guilt of adultery.

In the application of this subject, it becomes us to use it,

1. *In the way of self-examination.* — If it be indeed so — that all we can do or suffer is in vain, if we have not sincere love to God in the heart — then it should put us upon searching ourselves whether or no we have this love in sincerity in our hearts. There are many that make a profession and show of religion, and some that do many of the outward things which it requires, and possibly they may think that they have done and suffered much for God and his service. But the great inquiry is, has the heart been sincere in it all, and has all been suffered or done from a regard to the divine glory? Doubtless, if we examine ourselves, we may see much of hypocrisy. But is there any sincerity? God abominates the greatest things without sincerity, but he accepts of and delights in little things when they spring from sincere love to himself. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in sincere love, is worth more in God's sight than all one's goods given to feed the poor, yea, than the wealth of a kingdom given away, or a body offered up in the flames, without love. And God accepts of even a little sincere love. Though there be a great deal of imperfection, yet, if there be any true sincerity in our love, that little shall not be rejected because there is some hypocrisy with it. And here it may be profitable to observe, that there are these four things that belong to the nature of sincerity, *viz.*

truth, freedom, integrity, and purity. And,

First, truth. — That is, that there be that truly in the heart of which there is the appearance and show in the outward action. Where there is, indeed, true respect to God, the love that honors him will be felt in the heart, just as extensively as there is a show made of it in the words and actions. In this sense it is said in the fifty-first psalm, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." And in this view it is that sincerity is spoken of in the Scriptures as the opposite of hypocrisy, and that a sincere Christian is said to be one that is such indeed as he appears to be — one "without guile" (John 1:47). Examine yourself, therefore, with respect to this matter. If in your outward actions, there is an appearance or show of respect to God, inquire if it be only external, or if it be sincerely felt in your heart. For without real love or charity you are nothing. The

Second thing, in the nature of sincerity, is Freedom. On this account especially the obedience of Christians is called filial, or the obedience of children, because it is an ingenuous, free obedience, and not legal, slavish, and forced, but that which is performed from love and with delight. God is chosen for his own sake; and holiness for its sake, and for God's sake. Christ is chosen and followed because he is loved, and religion because it is loved, and the soul rejoices in it, finding in its duties the highest happiness and delight. Examine yourself faithfully on this point, whether or no this spirit is yours. The

Third thing belonging to the nature of this sincerity is Integrity. The word signifies *wholeness,* intimating that where this sincerity exists, God is sought, and religion is chosen and embraced with the whole heart, and adhered to with the whole soul. Holiness is chosen with the whole heart. The whole of duty is embraced, and entered upon most cordially, whether it have respect to God or to man, whether it be easy or difficult, whether it have reference to little things or great. There is a proportion and fullness in the character. The whole man is renewed. The whole body and soul and spirit are sanctified. Every member is yielded to the obedience of Christ. All the parts of the new creature are brought into subjection to his will. The seeds of all holy dispositions are implanted in the soul, and they will more and more bear fruit in the performance of duty and for the

glory of God. The

Fourth thing that belongs to the nature of sincerity is Purity. The word *sincere* often signifies *pure*. So in 1 Pet. 2:2 — "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" *i.e.* pure, unmixed, unadulterated. This appears in the opposition of virtue to sin. The one is spoken of as defilement, and impurity, and uncleanness: the other, as that which is free from these things. The apostle compares sin to a body of death, or a dead body, which of all things is most polluting and defiling, while holiness is spoken of as purity, and holy pleasures as pure pleasures, and the saints in heaven as without spot before the throne of God. Inquire, then, whether this purity is yours, and whether, in its possession, you find the evidence that you sincerely love God. This subject may also

2. *Convince those who are still in an unregenerate state, of their lost condition.* — If it be indeed so, that by all you can either do or suffer, you cannot make up for the want of a holy, sincere principle of love in your heart, then it will follow that you are in an undone condition till you have obtained God's regenerating grace to renew a right spirit within you; and that, do what you will, or undergo and suffer what you will, you cannot be delivered from your wickedness without the converting grace of God. If you make ever so many prayers, that will not make your case less miserable, unless God, by his mighty power, is pleased to give you a new heart. If you take ever so much pains in religion, and cross and deny yourself, and do or suffer ever so much, all will not avail without this. Therefore, whatever you have done, though you can look back upon a great many prayers offered, and much time spent in reading and meditation, you have no reason to think that these things have made any atonement for your sins, or rendered your case any the less deplorable, or left you any other than a wretched, lost, miserable, guilty, and ruined creature.

Natural, unrenewed men would he glad to have something to make up for the want of sincere love and real grace in their hearts. Many do great things to make up for the want of it, while others are willing to suffer

great things. But, alas! how little does it all signify! No matter what they may do or suffer, it does not change their character. If they build their hopes upon it, they do but delude themselves, and feed upon the east wind. If such be your case, consider how miserable you will be while you live without hope in the only true source of hope, and how miserable when you come to die, when the sight of the king of terrors will show the nothingness and vanity of all your doings. How miserable, when you see Christ coming to judgment in the clouds of heaven! Then you will be willing to do and suffer anything, that you may be accepted by him. But doings or sufferings will not avail. They will not atone for your sins, or give you God's favor, or save you from the overwhelming storms of his wrath. Rest, then, on nothing that you have done or suffered, or that you can do or suffer, but rest on Christ. Let your heart be filled with sincere love to him; and then, at the last great day, he will own you as his follower and as his friend. The subject,

3. *Exhorts all earnestly to cherish sincere Christian love in their hearts.* — If it be so, that this is of such great and absolutes necessity, then let it be the one great thing that you seek. Seek it with diligence and prayer, and seek it of God, and not of yourself. He only can bestow it. It is something far above the unassisted power of nature. For though there may be great performances, and great sufferings too, yet without sincere love they are all in vain. Such doings and sufferings may indeed be required of us, as the followers of Christ, and in the way of duty. But we are not to rest in them, or feel that they have any merit or worthiness in themselves. At best they are but the outward evidence and the outflowing of a right spirit in the heart. Be exhorted, then, as the great thing, to cherish sincere love, or Christian charity, in the heart. It is that which you must have; and there is nothing that will help your case without it. Without it, all will, in some respect, but tend to deepen your condemnation, and to sink you to but lower depths in the world of despair!

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Love Disposes Us Meekly to Bear the Injuries Received from Others

Charity suffers long, and is kind. ***- 1 Corinthians 13:4***

The apostle, in the previous verses, as we have seen, sets forth how great and essential a thing charity, or a spirit of Christian love, is, in Christianity: that it is far more necessary and excellent than any of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, that it far exceeds all external performances and sufferings, and, in short, that it is the sum of all that is distinguishing and saving in Christianity the very life and soul of all religion, without which, though we give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned, we are nothing. And now he proceeds, as his subject naturally leads him, to show the excellent nature of charity, by describing its several amiable and excellent fruits. In the text, two of these fruits are mentioned: *suffering long*, which has respect to the evil or injury received from others; and *being kind,* which has respect to the good to be done to others. Dwelling, for the present, on the first of these points, I would endeavor to show,

THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WILL DISPOSE US MEEKLY TO BEAR THE EVIL THAT IS RECEIVED FROM OTHERS, OR THE INJURIES THAT OTHERS MAY DO TO US.

Meekness is a great part of the Christian spirit. Christ, in that earnest and touching call and invitation of his that we have in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, in which he invites all that labor and are heavy-laden to come to himself for rest, particularly mentions, that he would have them come to *learn* of him; for he adds, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” And meekness, as it respects injuries received from men, is called *long-suffering* in the Scriptures, and is often mentioned as an exercise, or fruit of the Christian spirit (Gal. 5:22) — “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering;” and Eph. 4:1, 2 “I therefore, the prisoner of the

Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering," etc.; and Col. 3:12, 13 — "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

In dwelling more fully on this point, I would — I. Take notice of some of the various kinds of injuries that we may receive from others; II. Show what is meant by meekly bearing such injuries; and, III. How that love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, will dispose us to do this. And,

I. *I would briefly notice some of the various kind of injuries that we may or do receive from others.* — Someinjure others in their estates by unfairness and dishonesty in their dealings, by being fraudulent and deceitful with them, or at least by leading them to act in the dark, and taking advantage of their ignorance; or by oppressing them, taking advantage of their necessities; or by unfaithfulness towards them, not fulfilling their promises and engagements, and being slack and slighting in any business they are employed in by their neighbors, aiming at nothing but just to meet the letter of their engagements, and not being careful to improve their time to the utmost in accomplishing that which they are engaged to do; or by asking unreasonable prices for what they do; or by withholding what is due, from their neighbors, unjustly, neglecting to pay their debts, or unnecessarily putting their neighbors to trouble and difficulty to get what is due from them. And besides these, there are many other methods in which men injure one another in their dealings, by an abundance of crooked and perverse ways, in which they are far from doing to others as they would have them do to themselves, and by which they provoke and irritate and injure one another.

Some injure others in their good name, by reproaching or speaking evil of them behind their backs. No injury is more common, and no iniquity more frequent or base, than this. Other ways of injury are abundant, but the amount of injury by evil-speaking of this kind, is beyond account. Some injure others by making or spreading false reports about them, and so cruelly slandering them. Others, without saying that which is directly false, greatly misrepresent things, picturing out everything respecting

their neighbors in the worst colors, exaggerating their faults, and setting them forth as far greater than they really are, always speaking of them in an unfair and unjust manner. A great deal of injury is done among neighbors by thus uncharitably judging one another, and putting injurious and evil constructions on one another's words and actions.

Persons may greatly injure others in their thoughts, by unjustly entertaining mean thoughts, or a low esteem of them. Some are deeply and continually injurious to others, by the contempt they habitually have of them in their hearts, and by their willingness to think the worst about them. And, as the outflowing of the thoughts, a great deal is done to the injury of others by the words; for the tongue is but too ready to be the wicked instrument of expressing the evil thoughts and feelings of the soul, and hence, in the Scriptures (Job 5:21), it is called a scourge, and is compared (Psa. 140:3) to the fangs of some very poisonous kinds of serpents, whose bite is supposed to cause death.

Sometimes men injure others in their treatment and actions towards them, and in the injurious deeds they do them. If clothed with authority, they sometimes carry themselves very injuriously toward those over whom their authority extends, by behaving very assumingly and magisterially and tyrannically toward them. Sometimes those who are under authority, carry themselves very injuriously toward those who are over them, by denying them that respect and honor which are due to their places, and thus to themselves while they occupy them. Some carry themselves very injuriously toward others by the exercise of a very selfish spirit, seeming to be all for themselves, and apparently having no regard to the good or benefit of their neighbor, but all their contrivance is only to better their own interests. Some carry themselves injuriously in the manifestation of a very haughty and proud spirit, as though they thought they were more excellent than all others, and that nobody was at all to be regarded except themselves alone. This appears in their air and talk and actions, and their greatly assuming behavior in general, all of which are such, that those about them feel, and justly feel, that they are injured by them. Some carry themselves very injuriously by the exercise of a very willful spirit, being so desperately set on having their own way, that they will, if possible, bend everything to their own will, and never will alter

their career, nor yield to the wishes of others. They shut their eyes against the light or motives others may offer, and have no regard to anyone's inclination but their own, being always perverse and willful in having their own way. Some carry themselves injuriously in the course they take in public affairs, acting not so much from a regard for the public good, as from the spirit of opposition to some party, or to some particular person, so that the party or person opposed is injured, and oftentimes is greatly provoked and exasperated. Some injure others by the malicious and wicked spirit they cherish against them, whether with or without cause. It is not an uncommon thing for neighbors to dislike and even hate one another; not cherishing anything like love to each other in their hearts, but whether they acknowledge it or not, in reality hating one another, having no delight in each other's honor and prosperity, but, on the contrary, being pleased when they are cast down and in adversity, foolishly and wickedly thinking, perhaps, that another's fall is their own elevation, which it never is. Some injure others by the spirit of envy they show toward them, cherishing ill-will toward them for no other reason than for the honor and prosperity they enjoy.

Many injure others from a spirit of revenge, deliberately returning evil for evil, for real or imaginary injuries received from them. Some, as long as they live, will keep up a grudge in their hearts against their neighbor, and whenever an opportunity offers, will act it out in injury to him in the spirit of malice. And in innumerable other particular ways which might be mentioned, do men injure one another; though these may suffice for our present purpose. But,

II. *I would go on to show what is meant by meekly bearing such injuries, or how they ought meekly to be borne.* — And here I would show, first, the nature of the duty enjoined; and then why it is called long-suffering, or suffering long. And,

1. *I would show the nature of the duty of meekly bearing the injuries we suffer from others.* And,

First, it implies that injuries offered *should be borne without doing*

anything to revenge them. — There are many ways in which men do that which is revengeful: not merely by actually bringing some immediate suffering on the one that may have injured them, but by anything, either in speech or behavior, which shows a bitterness of spirit against him for what he has done. Thus, if after we are offended or injured, we speak reproachfully to our neighbor, or of him to others, with a design to lower or injure him, and that we may gratify the bitter spirit we feel in our hearts for the injury that neighbor has done us, this is revenge. He, therefore, that exercises a Christian long-suffering toward his neighbor, will bear the injuries received from him without revenging or retaliating, either by injurious deeds or bitter words. He will bear it without doing anything against his neighbor that shall manifest the spirit of resentment, without speaking to him, or of him, with revengeful words, and without allowing a revengeful spirit in his heart, or manifesting it in his behavior. He will receive all with a calm, undisturbed countenance, and with a soul full of meekness, quietness, and goodness. This he will manifest in all his behavior to the one that has injured him, whether to his face or behind his back. Hence it is, that this virtue is recommended in the Scriptures under the name of gentleness, or as always connected with it, as may be seen in Jam. 3:17, and Gal. 5:22. In him that exercises the Christian spirit as he ought, there will not be a passionate, rash, or hasty expression, or a bitter, exasperated countenance, or an air of violence in the talk or behavior. But, on the contrary, the countenance and words and demeanor will all manifest the savor of peaceableness and calmness and gentleness. He may perhaps reprove his neighbor. This may clearly be his duty. But if he does, it will be without impoliteness, and without that severity that can tend only to exasperate. Though it may be with strength of reason and argument, and with plain and decided expostulation, it will still be without angry reflections or contemptuous language. He may show a disapprobation of what has been done, but it will be not with an appearance of high resentment, but as reproving the offender for a sin against God, rather than as for the offense against himself: as lamenting his calamity, more than resenting his injury, as seeking his good, not his hurt, and as one that more desires to deliver the offender out of the error into which he has fallen, than to be even with him for the injury done to himself. The duty enjoined also implies,

Secondly, that injuries be borne *with the continuance of love in the heart, and without those inward emotions and passions that tend to interrupt and destroy it.* — Injuries should be borne, where we are called to suffer them, not only without manifesting an evil and revengeful spirit in our words and actions, but also without such a spirit in the heart. We should not only control our passions when we are injured, and refrain from giving vent to outward revenge, but the injury should be borne without the spirit of revenge in the heart. Not only a smooth external behavior should be continued, but also a sincere love with it. We should not cease to love our neighbor because he has injured us. We may pity, but not hate him for it. The duty enjoined also implies,

Thirdly, that injuries be borne *without our losing the quietness and repose of our own minds and hearts*. They should not only be borne without a rough behavior, but with a continuance of inward calmness and repose of spirit. When the injuries we suffer are allowed to disturb our calmness of mind, and put us into an excitement and tumult, then we cease to bear them in the true spirit of long-suffering. If the injury is permitted to discompose and disquiet us, and to break up our inward rest, we cannot enjoy ourselves, and are not in a state to engage properly in our various duties, and especially we are not in a state for religious duties — for prayer and meditation. And such a state of mind is the contrary of the spirit of long-suffering and meekly bearing of injuries that is spoken of in the text. Christians ought still to keep the calmness and serenity of their minds undisturbed, whatever injuries they may suffer. Their souls should be serene, and not like the unstable surface of the water, disturbed by every wind that blows. No matter what evils they may suffer, or what injuries may be inflicted on them, they should still act on the principle of the words of the Savior to his disciples (Luke 21:19) — "In your patience possess ye your souls." The duty we are speaking of also implies, once more

Fourthly, that in many cases, when we are injured, *we should be willing to suffer much in our interests and feelings for the sake of peace, rather than do what we have opportunity, and perhaps the right, to do in defending ourselves.* — Whenwe suffer injuries from others, the case is often such that a Christian spirit, if we did but exercise it as we ought,

would dispose us to forbear taking the advantage we may have to vindicate and right ourselves. For by doing otherwise, we may be the means of bringing very great calamity on him that has injured us, and tenderness toward him may and ought to dispose us to a great deal of forbearance, and to suffer somewhat ourselves, rather than bring so much suffering on him. And besides, such a course would probably lead to a violation of peace, and to an established hostility, whereas in this way there may be hope of gaining our neighbor, and from an enemy making him a friend. These things are manifest from what the apostle says to the Corinthians concerning going to law one with another — "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:7) Not that all endeavors in men to defend and right themselves, when they are injured by others, are censurable, or that they should suffer all the injuries that their enemies please to bring upon them, rather than improve an opportunity they have to defend and vindicate themselves, even though it be to the damage of him that injures them. But in many, and probably in most cases, men ought to suffer long first, in the spirit of the long-suffering charity of the text. And the case may often be such, that they may be called to suffer considerably, as charity and prudence shall direct, for the sake of peace, and from a sincere Christian love to the one that injures them, rather than deliver themselves in the way they may have opportunity for. Having thus shown what is implied in this virtue, I would now show, briefly,

2. *Why it is called long-suffering, or suffering long*. — And it seems to be so called, especially on two accounts: —

First, because we ought meekly to bear *not only a small injury, but also a good deal of injurious treatment from others*. We should persevere and continue in a quiet frame, without ceasing still to love our neighbor, not only when he injures us a little, but when he injures us much, and the injuries he does us are great. And we should not only thus bear a few injuries, but a great many, and though our neighbor continues his injurious treatment to us for a long time. When it is said that charity suffers long, we cannot infer from this that we are to bear injuries meekly for a season, and that after that season we may cease thus to bear them.

The meaning is not, that we must indeed bear injuries for a long time, but may cease to bear them at last. But it is, that we should meekly continue to bear them though they are long continued, even to the end. The spirit of long-suffering should never cease. And it is called long-suffering,

Secondly, because in some cases we should be willing to *suffer a great while in our interests, before we improve opportunities of righting ourselves.* — Thoughwe may defend ourselves at last, when we are driven, as it were, by necessity to it, yet we are not to do it out of revenge, or to injure him that has injured us, but only for needful self-defense. Even this, in many cases, is to be given up for peace, and out of a Christian spirit toward him that has injured us, and lest we should do injury to him. Having thus shown in what ways we are often injured by others, and what is implied in meekly bearing the injuries thus inflicted, I come now to show,

III. *How that love or charity, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, till dispose us meekly to bear such injuries.* — Andthis may be shown both in reference to love to God and love to our neighbors. And,

1. *Love to God and the Lord Jesus Christ has a tendency to dispose us to this.* For,

First, love to God disposes us to *imitate* him, and therefore disposes us to such long-suffering as he manifests. Long-suffering is often spoken of as one of the attributes of God. In Exo. 34:6, it is said, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering," etc. And in Rom. 2:4, the apostle asks, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering?" The long-suffering of God is very wonderfully manifest in his bearing innumerable injuries from men, and injuries that are very great and long-continued. If we consider the wickedness that there is in the world, and then consider how God continues the world in existence, and does not destroy it, but showers upon it innumerable mercies, the bounties of his daily providence and grace, causing his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain alike on the just and on the unjust,

and offering his spiritual blessings ceaselessly and to all, we shall perceive how abundant is his long-suffering toward us. And if we consider his long-suffering to some of the great and populous cities of the world, and think how constantly the gifts of his goodness are bestowed on and consumed by them, and then consider how great the wickedness of these very cities is, it will show us how amazingly great is his long-suffering. And the same long-suffering has been manifest to very many particular persons, in all ages of the world. He is long-suffering to the sinners that he spares, and to whom he offers his mercy, even while they are rebelling against him. And he is long-suffering toward his own elect people, many of whom long lived in sin, and despised alike his goodness and his wrath: and yet he bore long with them, even to the end, till they were brought to repentance, and made, through his grace, vessels of mercy and glory. And this mercy he showed to them even while they were enemies and rebels, as the apostle tells us was the case with himself — "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:12-16). Now, it is the nature of love, at least in reference to a superior, that it always inclines and disposes to imitation of him. A child's love to his father disposes him to imitate his father, and especially does the love of God's children dispose them to imitate their heavenly Father. And as he is long-suffering, so they should be. And,

Secondly, love to God will dispose us thus to *express our gratitude* for his long-suffering exercised toward us. Love not only disposes to imitate, but it works by gratitude. And they that love God will be thankful to him for the abundant long-suffering that he has exercised toward them in particular. They that love God as they ought, will have such a sense of his wonderful long-suffering toward them under the many injuries they have offered to him, that it will seem to them but a small thing to bear with the

injuries that have been offered to them by their fellowmen. All the injuries they have ever received from others, in comparison with those they have offered to God, will appear less than a few pence in comparison with ten thousand talents. And as they thankfully accept of and admire God's long-suffering toward themselves, so they cannot but testify their approbation of it, and their gratitude for it, by manifesting, so far as they are able, the same long-suffering to others. For if they should refuse to exercise long-suffering toward those that have injured them, they would practically disapprove of God's long-suffering toward themselves. For what we truly approve of and delight in, we shall not practically reject. And then gratitude for God's long-suffering will also dispose us to obedience to and in this particular, when he commands us to be long-suffering toward others. And so, again,

Thirdly, love to God *tends to humility,* which is one main root of a meek and long-suffering spirit. Love to God, as it exalts him, tends to low thoughts and estimates of ourselves, and leads to a deep sense of our unworthiness and our desert of ill, because he that loves God is sensible of the hatefulness and vileness of sin committed against the Being that he loves. And discerning anabundance of this in himself, he abhors himself in his own eyes, as unworthy of any good, and deserving of all evil. Humility is always found connected with long-suffering, as says the apostle (Eph. 4:2) — "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." A humble spirit disinclines us to indulge resentment of injuries, for he that is little and unworthy in his own eyes, will not think so much of an injury offered to him as he that has high thoughts of himself. For it is deemed a greater and higher enormity to offend one that is great and high, than one that is mean and vile. It is pride or self-conceit that is very much the foundation of a high and bitter resentment, and of an unforgiving and revengeful spirit. Again,

Fourthly, love to God disposes men to have *regard to the hand of God in the injuries they suffer,* and not only to the hand of man, and meekly to submit to his will therein. Love to God disposes men to see his hand in everything: to own him as the governor of the world, and the director of providence, and to acknowledge his disposal in everything that takes place. And the fact that the hand of God is a great deal more concerned in

all that happens to us than the treatment of men is, should lead us, in a great measure, not to think of things as from men, but to have respect to them chiefly as from God — as ordered by his love and wisdom, even when their immediate source may be the malice or heedlessness of a fellowman. And if we indeed consider and feel that they are from the hand of God, then we shall be disposed meekly to receive and quietly to submit to them, and to own that the greatest injuries received from men are justly and even kindly ordered of God, and so be far from any ruffle or tumult of mind on account of them. It was with this view that David so meekly and quietly bore the curses of Shimei, when he came forth, and cursed and cast stones at him (2 Sam. 16:5, 10), saying that the Lord had bid him do it, and therefore forbidding his followers to avenge it. And once more,

Fifthly, love to God disposes us meekly to bear injuries from others, because it *sets us very much above the injuries of men.* And it does so in two respects. In the first place, it sets above the reach of injuries from others, because nothing can ever really hurt those that are the true friends of God. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and he, as their protector and friend, will carry them on high as on the wings of eagles. All things shall work together for their good (Rom. 8:28), and none shall be permitted really to harm them, while they are followers of that which is good (1 Pet. 3:13). And then, in the next place, as love to God prevails, it tends to set persons above human injuries, in this sense, that the more they love God, the more they will place all their happiness in him. They will look to God as their all, and seek their happiness and portion in his favor, and that not in the allotments of his providence alone. The more they love God, the less they set their hearts on their worldly interests, which are all that their enemies can touch. Men can injure God's people only with respect to worldly good. But the more a man loves God, the less is his heart set on the things of the world, and the less he feels the injuries that his enemies may inflict, because they cannot reach beyond these things. And so it often is the case, that the friends of God hardly think the injuries they receive from men are worthy of the name of injuries, and the calm and quietness of their minds are scarcely disturbed by them. And as long as they have the favor and friendship of God, they are not much concerned about the evil work and injuries of men. Love to God, and a

sense of his favor, dispose them to say of the injuries of men, when they would take from them their worldly enjoyments, as Mephibosheth did of Ziba's taking the land (2 Sam.19:30), "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." And as love to God will, in these several respects, dispose us to long-suffering under injuries from others, so,

3. *Love to our neighbor will dispose us to the same.* — In this sense, charity suffers long — long-suffering and forbearance are always the fruit of love. As the apostle intimates (Eph. 4:1, 2), it is a part of our walking worthily of the Christian vocation, that we walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Love will bear with a multitude of faults and offenses, and will incline us (Pro. 10:12) to cover all sins. So we see by abundant observation and experience. Those that we have a great and strong affection for, we always bear a great deal more from, than from those that we dislike, or to whom we are indifferent. A parent will bear many things in his own child that he would greatly reprobate in the child of another, and a friend tolerates many things in his friend that he would not in a stranger. But there is no need to multiply words or reasons on this branch of the subject, for it is exceedingly plain to all. All know that love is of such a nature, that it is directly contrary both to resentment and revenge, for these imply ill-will, which is the very reverse of love, and cannot exist with it. Without dwelling, then, on this point, I pass, in conclusion, to make some brief improvement of the subject. And,

1. *It exhorts us all to the duty of meekly bearing the injuries that may be received from others.* — Let what has been said be improved by us to suppress all wrath, revenge, and bitterness of spirit, toward those that have injured, or that may at any time injure us: whether they injure us in our estates or good names, or whether they abuse us with their tongues or with their hands, and whether those that injure us are our superiors, inferiors, or equals. Let us not say in our heart, I will do to him as he hath done to me. Let us not endeavor, as is sometimes said, "to be even with him," by some kind of retaliation, or so much as suffer any hatred or bitterness or vindictiveness of spirit, to rise in our hearts. Let us endeavor, under all injuries, to preserve the calmness and quiet of our

spirits, and be ready rather to suffer considerably in our just rights, than do anything that may occasion our stirring up, and living in, strife and contention. To this end I would offer for consideration the following motives: —

First, consider the *example that Christ has set us.* — He was of a meek and quiet spirit, and of a most long-suffering behavior. In 2 Cor. 10:1, we are told by the apostle of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He meekly bore innumerable and very great injuries from men. He was very much the object of bitter contempt and reproach, and slighted and despised as of but little account. Though he was the Lord of glory, yet he was set at nought, and rejected and disesteemed of men. He was the object of the spite and malice and bitter revilings of the very ones he came to save. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. He was called a glutton and a drunkard; and though holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, yet he was charged with being a friend of publicans and sinners. He was called a deceiver of the people, and oftentimes (as in John 10:20; John 7:20) he was said to be mad, and possessed with the devil. Sometimes they reproached him (John 8:48) with being a Samaritan, and having a devil: the former being esteemed by the Jesus as the highest reproach, and the latter as implying the most diabolical wickedness. He was sometimes charged (John 10:33) with being a wicked blasphemer, and one that deserved death on that account. Sometimes they charged him with working miracles by the power and aid of Beelzebub the prince of devils, and even called him (Mat. 10:25) a devil himself. And such was their spite against him, that they had agreed (John 9:22) to excommunicate or cast out of the synagogue anyone that should say that he was the Christ. They hated him with a mortal hatred, and wished he was dead, and from time to time endeavored to murder him, yea, were almost always endeavoring to imbrue their hands in his blood. His very life was an annoyance to them, and they hated him so (Psa. 41:5), that they could not bear that he should live. We very often read (as in John 5:16) of their seeking to kill him. And what pains did many of them take to watch him in his words, that they might have something of which to accuse him, and thus be able, with the show of reason, to put him to death! And many times they combined together to take his life in this manner. They often actually took up stones to stone him, and once

led him to the brow of a hill, that they might cast him down, and thus dash him to pieces. And yet Christ meekly bore all these injuries without resentment or one word of reproach, and with a heavenly quietness of spirit passed through them all. And at last, when he was most ignominiously dealt with of all, when his professed friend betrayed, and his enemies seized him, and led him away to scourging and the death of the cross, he went as a lamb to the slaughter, opening not his mouth. Not one word of bitterness escaped him. There was no interruption of the calmness of his mind under his heavy distress and sufferings, nor was there the least desire for revenge. But, on the contrary, he prayed for his murderers, that they might be forgiven, even when they were about nailing him to the cross, and not only prayed for them, but pleaded in their behalf with his Father, that they knew not what they did. The sufferings of his life, and the agonies of his death, did not interrupt his long-suffering toward those that injured him.

Second, if we are not disposed meekly to bear injuries, *we are not fitted to live in the world,* for in it we must expect to meet with many injuries from men. We do not dwell in a world of purity and innocence and love, but in one that is fallen and corrupt, and miserable and wicked, and that is very much under the reign and dominion of sin. The principle of Divine love that was once in the heart of man is extinguished, and now reigns in but few, and in them in a very imperfect degree. And those principles that tend to malice and injuriousness are the principles that the generality of the world are under the power of. This world is a place where the devil, who is called the god of this world, has influence and dominion, and where multitudes are possessed of his spirit. All men, as the apostle says (2 Thess. 3:2), have not faith. Indeed, but few have that spirit of faith in the heart which leads to the life being governed by the rules of justice and kindness toward others. The aspect of the world is too much that of which our Savior spoke, when, in sending out his disciples, he said (Mat. 10:16), “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” And therefore those that have not a spirit, with meekness, and calmness, and long-suffering, and composedness of soul, to bear injuries in such a world, are miserable indeed, and are like to be wretched at every step of their way through life. If every injury we must meet, and every reproach, and malicious and unjust deed, is to put our minds and hearts into a ruffle

and tumult, and disturb the calm and peace in which we may enjoy ourselves, then we can have no possession or enjoyment of spirit, but shall be kept in a perpetual turmoil and tumult, like the bark that is driven to and fro continually on the stormy ocean. Men that have their spirits heated and enraged, and rising in bitter resentment when they are injured, act as if they thought some strange thing had happened to them. Whereas they are very foolish in so thinking, for it is no strange thing at all, but only what was to be expected in a world like this. They, therefore, do not act wisely, that allow their spirits to be ruffled by the injuries they suffer, for a wise man doth but expect more or less injury in the world, and is prepared for it, and, in meekness of spirit, is prepared to endure it.

Third, in this way *we shall be most above injuries.* He that has established such a spirit and disposition of mind that the injuries received from others do not exasperate and provoke him, or disturb the calmness of his mind, lives, as it were, above injuries, and out of their reach. He conquers them, and rides over and above them, as in triumph, exalted above their power. He that has so much of the exercise of a Christian spirit, as to be able meekly to bear all injuries done him, dwells on high, where no enemy can reach him. History tells us, that when the Persians besieged Babylon, the walls of the city were so exceeding high, that the inhabitants used to stand on the top of them, and laugh at their enemies. So one whose soul is fortified with a spirit of Christian meekness, and a disposition calmly to bear all injuries, may laugh at the enemy that would injure him. If any that have an ill spirit against us, and are therefore disposed to do us an injury by reproaching us or otherwise, see that by so doing they can disturb and vex us, they are gratified thereby. But if they see that by all they can do they cannot interrupt the calm of our minds, nor break up our serenity of soul, then they are frustrated in their aim, and the shafts with which they would wound us fall back without doing the execution they intended. While, on the other hand, just in proportion as we allow our minds to be disturbed and embarrassed by the injuries offered by an adversary, just in the same proportion do we fall under his power.

Fourth, the spirit of Christian long-suffering, and of meekness in bearing injuries, *is a mark of true greatness of soul.* It shows a true and noble

nature, and real greatness of spirit, thus to maintain the calmness of the mind in the midst of injuries and evils. It is an evidence of excellence of temper, and of inward fortitude and strength. “He that is slow to anger,” says Solomon (Pro. 16:32), “is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city;” that is, he shows a more noble and excellent nature, and more true greatness of spirit, than the greatest conquerors of the earth. It is from littleness of mind that the soul is easily disturbed and put out of repose by the reproaches and ill-treatment of men: just as little streams of water are much disturbed by the small unevennesses and obstacles they meet with in their course, and make a great deal of noise as they pass over them, whereas great and mighty streams pass over the same obstacles calmly and quietly, without a ripple on the surface to show they are disturbed. He that possesses his soul after such a manner that, when others harm and injure him, he can, notwithstanding, remain in calmness and hearty goodwill toward them, pitying and forgiving them from the heart, manifests therein a godlike greatness of spirit. Such a meek and quiet and long-suffering spirit shows a true greatness of soul, in that it shows great and true wisdom, as says the apostle James (Jam. 3:13) — “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” And the wise Solomon, who well knew what belonged to wisdom, often speaks of the wisdom of such a spirit: declaring (Pro. 13:10) that “only by pride cometh contention; but with the well-advised is wisdom;” and again (Pro. 29:8), that “wise men turn away wrath;” and still again (Pro. 19:11), that “the discretion of a man deferreth his anger.” On the contrary, those that are apt highly to resent injuries, and to be greatly angered and vexed by them, are spoken of in the Scriptures as of a little and foolish spirit. “He that is slow to wrath,” says Solomon (Pro. 14:29), “is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly;” and again (Ecc. 7:8, 9), “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools;” and still again (Pro. 14:16-18), “The fool rageth and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly, and a man of wicked devices is hated. The simple inherit folly.” And, on the other hand, a meek spirit is expressly spoken of in the Scripture as an honorable spirit; as in Pro. 20:3 — “It is an honour for a man to cease from strife.”

Fifth, the spirit of Christian long-suffering and meekness *is commended to us by the example of the saints*. The example of Christ alone might be, and is sufficient; since it is the example of him who is our head, and Lord and master, whose followers we profess to be, and whose example we believe to be perfect. And yet some may be ready to say, with regard to the example of Christ, that he was sinless, and had no corruption in his heart, and that it cannot be expected of us that we should do in all things as he did. Now, though this is no reasonable objection, yet the example of saints, who were men of like passions with ourselves, is not without its special use, and may in some respects have a peculiar influence. Many of the saints have set bright examples of this long-suffering that has been recommended. With what meekness, for instance, did David bear the injurious treatment that he received from Saul, when he was hunted by him as a partridge on the mountains, and pursued with the most unreasonable envy and malice, and with murderous designs, though he had ever behaved himself dutifully toward him. And when he had the opportunity put into his hands of cutting him off, and at once delivering himself from his power, and others around him were ready to think it very lawful and commendable to do so, yet as Saul was the Lord's anointed, he chose rather to commit himself and all his interests to God, and venture his life in his hands, and suffer his enemy still to live. And when, after this, he saw that his forbearance and goodness did not overcome Saul, but that he still pursued him, and when again he had the opportunity of destroying him, he chose rather to go out as a wanderer and an outcast, than to injure the one that would have destroyed him.

Another instance is that of Stephen, of whom we are told (Acts 7:59, 60), that, when his persecutors were venting their rage upon him by stoning him to death, "he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This prayer is mentioned as that which he made with his expiring breath, and as the last words that he uttered after praying the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit; and immediately after making this prayer for his persecutors, we are told that he fell asleep, thus forgiving them and commending them to God's blessing as the last act of his life on earth. Another example is that of the apostle Paul, who was the subject of numberless injuries from wicked and unreasonable men. Of these injuries, and his manner of behavior under them, he gives us some

account in 1 Cor. 4:11-13 — "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." Thus he manifested a meek and long-suffering spirit under all the injuries that were heaped upon him. And not only do we have these records respecting inspired men; but we have accounts in uninspired and mere human histories, of the remarkable heroism and long-suffering of martyrs and other Christians, under the most unreasonable and wicked treatment and injuries received from men: all of which should lead us to the same meek and long-suffering spirit.

Sixth, this is the way *to be rewarded with the exercise of the Divine long-suffering toward us*. We are often informed in the Scriptures, that men are to be dealt with by God hereafter, according to their way of dealing with others. Thus we are told (Psa. 18:25, 26) that "with the merciful God will show himself merciful, and with the upright man, upright; that with the pure he will show himself pure, and with the froward he will show himself froward." And again (Mat. 7:2), "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;" and still again (Mat. 6:14, 15), "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." By *trespasses* here, is meant the same as injuries done to us, so that if we do not bear with men's injuries against us, neither will our heavenly Father bear with our injuries against him. If we do not exercise long-suffering toward men, we cannot expect that God will exercise long-suffering toward us. But let us consider how greatly we stand in need of God's long-suffering with regard to our injuries toward him. How often and how greatly are we injuriously behaving ourselves toward God, and how ill is our treatment of him every day! And if God did not bear with us, and exercise wonderful long-suffering toward us, how miserable should we be, and what would become of us! Let this consideration, therefore, influence all of us to seek such an excellent spirit as that which has been spoken of; and to disallow and suppress anything of the contrary spirit or practice. It would have a most happy influence on us as individuals, and

on our families, and so on all our public associations and affairs, if such a spirit as this prevailed. It would prevent contention and strife, and diffuse gentleness and kindness, and harmony and love. It would do away with bitterness and confusion, and every evil work. Our affairs would all be carried on, both in public and private, without fierceness, or edge, or bitterness of spirit; without harsh and opprobrious expressions to others, and without any of the malignant backbiting and contemptuous speech, that so often are heard among men, and which at the same time do great injury in society, and are making fearful work for the judgment.

But some, in their hearts, may be ready to object against such a meek and quiet bearing of injuries as has been spoken of, and some of these objections it may be profitable briefly to mention and answer: —

Objection 1. Some may he ready to say, *that the injuries they receive from men are intolerable;* that the one who has injured them has been so unreasonable in what he has said or done, and it is so unjust and injurious and unjustifiable, and the like, that it is more than flesh and blood can bear: that they are treated with so much injustice that it is enough to provoke a stone, or that they are treated with such contempt, that they are actually trampled on, and they cannot but resent it. But in answer to this objection, I would ask a few questions. And,

First, do you think the injuries you have received from your fellowman are more than you have offered to God? Has your enemy been more base, more unreasonable, more ungrateful, than you have to the High and Holy One? Have his offenses been more heinous or aggravated, or more in number, than yours have been against your Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer? Have they been more provoking and exasperating than your sinful conduct has been to him who is the author of all our mercies, and to whom you are under the highest obligations?

Second, do you not hope that as God hitherto has, so he will still bear with you in all this, and that notwithstanding all, he will exercise toward you his infinite love and favor? Do you not hope that God will have mercy upon you, and that Christ will embrace you in his dying love, though you have been such an injurious enemy, and that, through his grace, he will blot out your transgressions and all your offenses against him, and make

you eternally his child, and an heir of his kingdom?

Third, when you think of such long-suffering on God's part, do you not approve of it, and think well of it, and that it is not only worthy and excellent, but exceeding glorious? And do you not approve of it, that Christ should have died for you, and that God, through him, should offer you pardon and salvation? Or do you disapprove of this? And would you have liked God better, if he had not borne with you, but had long since cut you off in his wrath?

Fourth, if such a course be excellent and worthy to be approved of in God, why is it not so in yourself? Why should you not imitate it? Is God too kind in forgiving injuries? Is it less heinous to offend the Lord of heaven and earth, than for a man to offend you? Is it well for you to be forgiven, and that you should pray to God for pardon, and yet that you should not extend it to your fellowmen that have injured you?

Fifth, would you be willing, for all the future, that God should no longer bear with the injuries you may offer him, and the offenses you commit against him? Are you willing to go and ask God to deal with yourself for the future, as in holding this objection, you think of dealing with your fellowmen?

Sixth, did Christ turn again upon those who injured and insulted and trod on him, when he was here below, and was he not injured for more grievously than ever you have been? And have not you more truly trodden under foot the Son of God, than you were ever trodden on by others? And is it a more provoking thing for men to tread on and injure you, than for you to tread on and injure Christ? These questions may sufficiently answer your objection.

Objection 2. But you may still further say, that *those who have injured you, persist in it, and do not at all repent, but go on doing it still.* But what opportunity could there be for long-suffering, if injury were not persisted in long? If injuries are continued, it may be for the very purpose, in providence, of trying whether you will exercise long-suffering and meekness, and that forbearance that has been spoken of. And did not God bear with you, when you persisted in offending him? When you have

been obstinate, and self-willed, and persevering in your injuries against him, has he ceased to exercise his long-suffering toward you?

Objection 3. But you may object again, *that your enemies will be encouraged to go on with their injuries,* excusing yourself by saying, that if you bear injury, you will only be injured the more. But you do not know this, for you have not an insight into the future, nor into the hearts of men. And, beside, God will undertake for you, if you obey his commands, and he is more able to put a stop to the wrath of man than you are. He has said (Rom. 12:19), "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He interposed wonderfully for David, as he has for very many of his saints; and if you do but obey him, he will take part with you against all that rise up against you. And in the observation and experience of men, it is generally found that a meek and long-suffering spirit puts an end to injuries, while a revengeful spirit does but provoke them. Cherish, then, the spirit of long-suffering, meekness, and forbearance, and you shall possess your soul in patience and happiness, and none shall be permitted to harm you more than God in wisdom and kindness may permit.

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Love Disposes Us to Do Good

*Charity suffers long, and is kind.**-- 1 Corinthians 13:4***

In the last lecture from these words, it was shown that charity or Christian love is long-suffering, or that it disposes us meekly to bear the injuries received from others. And now it is proposed to show that it is kind, or, in other words,

THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WOULD DISPOSE US FREELY TO DO GOOD TO OTHERS

In dwelling on this point, I would — I. Briefly open the nature of the duty of doing good to others; and, II. Show that a Christian spirit will dispose us to it.

I. *I would briefly open the nature of the duty of doing good to others.* — Andhere, three things are to be considered, viz. the *act* — doing good, the *objects,* or those to whom we should do good; and the *manner* in which it should be done — freely. And,

1. *The act, which is the matter of the duty, which is, doing good to others.* — There are many ways in which persons may do good to others, and in which they are obliged so to do, as they have opportunity. And,

First, persons may do good *to the souls of others,* which is the most excellent way of doing good. Men may be, and oftentimes are, the instruments of spiritual and eternal good to others. Wherein any are so, they are the instruments of greater good to them than if they had given them the riches of the universe. And we may do good to the souls of others, by taking pains to instruct the ignorant and to lead them to the knowledge of the great things of religion, and by counseling and warning others, and stirring them up to their duty, and to a seasonable and thorough care for their souls' welfare, and so again, by Christian reproof of those that may be out of the way of duty, and by setting them good examples, which is a thing the most needful of all, and commonly the most effectual of all for the promotion of the good of their souls. Such an example must accompany the other means of doing good to the souls of men, such as instructing, counseling, warning, and reproving, and is needful to give force to such means, and to make them take effect. It is more likely to render them effectual than anything else whatsoever, and without it, they will be likely to be in vain.

Men may do good to the souls of vicious persons by being the means of reclaiming them from their vicious courses, or to the souls of neglecters of the sanctuary by persuading them to go to the house of God, or to the souls of secure and careless sinners by putting them in mind of their misery and danger, and so may be the instruments of awakening them, and the means of their conversion, and of bringing them home to Christ. Thus they may be of the number of those of whom we read (Dan. 12:3),

"that turn many to righteousness," and who "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Saints, too, may be the instruments of comforting and establishing one another, and of strengthening one another in faith and obedience; of quickening, and animating, and edifying one another; of raising one another out of dull and dead frames, and helping one another out of temptations, and onward in the divine life; of directing one another in doubtful and difficult cases; of encouraging one another under darkness or trial; and, generally, of promoting each other's spiritual joy and strength, and thus being mutually fellow helpers on their way to glory.

Second, persons may do good to others in *outward things, and for this world*. They may help others in their external difficulties and calamities, for there are innumerable kinds of temporal calamities to which mankind are liable, and in which they stand much in need of the help of their neighbors and friends. Many are hungry, or thirsty, or strangers, or naked, or sick, or in prison (Mat. 25:35, 36), or in suffering of some other kind: and to all such we may minister. We may do good to others, by furthering their outward estate or substance; or in aiding their good name, and thus promoting their esteem and acceptance among men; or by anything that may truly add to their comfort or happiness in the world, whether it be in the kind word, or the considerate and benevolent deed. And by endeavoring thus to do good to them externally, we are under the greater advantage to do good to their souls. For, when our instructions, counsels, warnings, and good examples are accompanied with such outward kindness, the latter tends to open the way for the better effect of the former, and to give them their full force, and to lead such persons to appreciate our efforts when we seek their spiritual good. And we may thus contribute to the good of others, in three ways: by *giving to them* of those things that they need, and we possess by *doing for them* and taking pains to help them and promote their welfare, and by *suffering for them* and aiding them to bear their burdens, and doing all in our power to make those burdens light. In each of these ways, Christianity requires us to do good to others. It requires us to *give* to others (Luke 6:38) — "Give, and it shall be given unto you." It requires us to *do* for others, and to labor for them (1 Thes. 2:9) — "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail; for labouring night and day, because we would not be

chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God;" and Heb. 6:10 — "For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love," etc. And it requires us, if need be, to *suffer* for others (Gal. 6:2) — " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;" and 1 John 3:16 — "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the. brethren." So that, in all these ways, the Scriptures require us to do good to all. I pass, then, to speak,

2. *Of the objects of this act, or of those to whom we should do good.* — These are often spoken of in the Scriptures by the expression, "our neighbour;" for the duty before us is implied in the command, that we love our neighbor as ourselves. But here, perhaps, we may be ready, with the young lawyer that came to Christ (Luke 10:29, etc.), to ask, "Who is my neighbour?" And as Christ's answer taught him that the Samaritan was neighbor to the Jew, though the Samaritans and Jews were each esteemed by the other vile and accursed, and as bitter enemies, so we may be taught who those are to whom we are to do good, in three respects: —

First, we are to do good both to the *good* and to the *bad*. This we are to do, as we would imitate our heavenly Father, for "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mat. 5:43-45). The world is full of various kinds of persons some good, and some evil; and we should do good to all. We should, indeed, especially "do good to them that are of the household of faith," or that we have reason, in the exercise of charity, to regard as saints. But though we should most abound in beneficence to them, yet our doing good should not be confined to them, but we should do good to all men, as we have opportunity. While we live in the world, we must expect to meet with some men of very evil properties, and hateful dispositions and practices. Some are proud, some immoral, some covetous, some profane, some unjust or severe, and some despisers of God. But any or all of these bad qualities should not hinder our beneficence, nor prevent our doing them good as we have opportunity. On this very account, we should the rather be diligent to benefit them, that we may win them to Christ, and especially should we be diligent to benefit them in spiritual things.

Second, we should do good both to *friends* and *enemies*. We are obliged to do good to our friends, not only from the obligation we are under to do good to them as our fellow creatures, and those that are made in the image of God, but from the obligations of friendship and gratitude, and the affection we bear them. And we are also obliged to do good to our enemies; for our Savior says (Mat. 5:44), "But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." To do good to those that do ill to us, is the only retaliation that becomes us as Christians; for we are taught (Rom. 12:17-21) to "recompense to no man evil for evil," but, on the contrary, to "overcome evil with good;" and again, it is written (1 Thes. 5:15)"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men;" and still again (1 Pet. 3:9) — "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." And,

Third, we should do good both to the *thankful* and the *unthankful*. This we are obliged to do by the example of our heavenly Father, for he (Luke 6:35) "is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil;" and the command is, that we "be merciful, as he also is merciful." Many make an objection against doing good to others, saying, "If I do, they will never thank me for it; and for my kindness, they will return abuse and injury:" and thus they are ready to excuse themselves from the exercise of kindness, especially to those who may have shown themselves ungrateful. But such persons do not sufficiently look at Christ, and they show either their want of acquaintance with the rules of Christianity, or their unwillingness to cherish its spirit. Having thus spoken of the duty of doing good, and the persons to whom we are to do it, I pass, as proposed, to speak,

3. *Of the manner in which we should do good to others*. — This is expressed in the single word, "*freely*." This seems implied in the words of the text; for to be kind, is to have a disposition freely to do good. Whatever good is done, there is no proper kindness in the doer of it, unless it be done freely. And this doing good freely implies three things: —

First, that our doing good *be not in a mercenary spirit*. We are not to do

it for the sake of any reward received or expected from the one to whom we do the good. The command is (Luke 6:35) — "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." Oftentimes men will do good to others, expecting to receive as much again; but we should do good to the poor and needy, from whom we can expect nothing in return. The command of Christ is (Luke 14:12-14) — "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." That our doing good be free, and not mercenary, it is necessary that what we do, be done, not for the sake of any temporal good, or to promote our temporal interest, or honor, or profit, but from the spirit of love.

Second, that our doing good be free, it is requisite that we do it *cheerfully* or *heartily,* and with real goodwill to the one we would benefit. What is done heartily, is done from love. What is done from love, is done with delight, and not grudgingly or with backwardness and reluctance of spirit. "Use hospitality," says the apostle (1 Pet. 4:9), "one to another, without grudging;" and says Paul (2 Cor. 9:7) — "Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." This requisite or qualification for our doing good, is much insisted on in the Scriptures. "He that giveth," says the apostle (Rom. 12:8), "let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." And God gives a strict charge (Deu. 15:10) that we "shall not be grieved" in our heart when we give to our neighbor. And, in a word, the very idea of giving acceptably is presented throughout the Bible as implying that we give with a cordial and cheerful spirit. Doing good freely also implies,

Third, that we do it *liberally and bountifully*. We are not to be scant and sparing in our gifts or efforts, but to be open-hearted and open-handed. We are to "abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8-11), "being enriched in everything to all bountifulness." Thus God requires that when we give to the poor, we should "open our hand wide unto him" (Deu. 15:8); and we are told (Pro. 11:25)that "the liberal soul shall be made fat;" and the

apostle would have the Corinthians be bountiful in their contributions for the poor saints in Judea, assuring them (2 Cor. 9:6) that "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Having thus explained the nature of this duty of freely doing good to others, I now proceed to show,

II. *That a Christian spirit will dispose us thus to do good to others.* — Andthis appears from two considerations: —

1. *The main thing in that love which is the sum of the Christian spirit, is benevolence, or goodwill to others.* — We have already seen what Christian love is, and how it is variously denominated according to its various objects and exercises, and, particularly, how, as it respects the good enjoyed or to be enjoyed *by* the beloved object, it is called the love of *benevolence,* and as it respects the good to be enjoyed *in* the beloved object, it is called the love of *complacence.* Love of benevolence is that disposition which leads us to have a desire for, or delight in, the good of another. That is the main thing in Christian love, yea, the most essential thing in it, and that whereby our love is most of an imitation of the eternal love and grace of God, and of the dying love of Christ, which consists in benevolence or goodwill to men, as was sung by the angels at his birth (Luke 2:14). So that the main thing in Christian love is goodwill, or a spirit to delight in and seek the good of those who are the objects of that love.

2. *The most proper and conclusive evidence that such a principle is real and sincere, is, its being effectual.* — The proper and conclusive evidence of our wishing or willing to do good to another is, to do it. In every case nothing can be plainer, than that the proper and conclusive evidence of the will, is the act, and the act always follows the will, where there is power to act. The proper and conclusive evidence of a man's sincerely desiring the good of another, is his seeking it in his practice for whatever we truly desire, we do thus seek. The Scriptures therefore speak of doing good, as the proper and full evidence of love. They often speak of loving in the deed or practice, as being the same thing as loving in truth and reality (1 John 3:18, 19) — "My little children, let us not love in word,

neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. Hereby we know that we are of the truth," *i.e.* know that we are sincere. And again (Jam. 2:15, 16) — "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" There is no profit to them, and so there is no evidence of sincerity on your part, and that you really desire that they should be clothed and fed. Sincerity of desire would lead not merely to *words,* but to the *deeds* of benevolence

In the application of this subject, in conclusion, we may use it,

1. *In the way of reproof.* — If a truly Christian spirit disposes persons freely to do good to others, then all those that are of a contrary spirit and practice may by it be reproved. Amalignant and malicious spirit is the very contrary of the former, for it disposes men to do evil to others, and not good. So also is a close and selfish spirit, whereby men are wholly bent on their own interests, and unwilling in anything to forego their own ends for the sake of others. And they, also, are of a spirit and practice the very opposite of a spirit of love, who show an exorbitantly grasping and avaricious spirit, and who take every opportunity to get all they possibly can from their neighbors in their dealings with them, asking them more for what they do for or sell to them than it is truly worth, and extorting to the utmost from them by unreasonable demands: having no regard to the value of the thing to their neighbor, but, as it were, forcing out of him all they can get for it. And they who do these things are generally very selfish also in buying from their neighbors, grinding and pinching them down to the lowest prices, and being very backward to give what the thing purchased is really worth. Such a spirit and practice are the very opposite of a Christian spirit, and are severely reproved by the great law of love, viz. That we do to others as we would have them do to us. The subject we have been considering, also,

2. *Exhorts all to the duty of freely doing good to others.* — Seeing that this is a Christian duty, and a virtue becoming the gospel, and to which a Christian spirit, if we possess it, will dispose us, let us seek, as we have opportunity, to do good to the souls and bodies of others, endeavoring to be a blessing to them for time and eternity. Let us, to this end, be willing

to do, or give, or suffer, that we may do good alike to friends and enemies, to the evil and the good, to the thankful and the unthankful. Let our benevolence and beneficence be universal, constant, free, habitual, and according to our opportunities and ability; for this is essential to true piety, and required by the commands of God. And here several things are to be considered: —

First, what a *great honor* it is to be made an instrument of good inthe world. When we fill up our lives with doing good, God puts the high honor upon us of making us a blessing to the world — an honor like that which he put upon Abraham, when he said (Gen. 12:2), "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." The very light of nature teaches that this is a great honor; and therefore the Eastern kings and governors used to assume to themselves the title of benefactors, that is, "doers of good," as the most honorable they could think of (Luke 22:25). It was a common thing in heathen lands, when those that had done a great deal of good in their lifetime were dead, for the people among whom they dwelt to reckon them as gods, and build temples to their honor, and for their worship. So far as God makes men the instruments of doing good to others, he makes them like the heavenly bodies — the sun, and moon, and stars, that bless the world by shedding down their light; he makes them like the angels, who are ministering spirits to others for their good. Yea, he makes them like himself, the great fountain of all good, who is forever pouring down his blessings on mankind.

Second, thus freely to do good to others, is but *to do to them as we would have them do to us*. If others have a hearty goodwill to us, and show us a great deal of kindness, and are ready to help us when we stand in need, and for that end are free to do, or give, or suffer for us, and to bear our burdens, and feel for us in our calamities, and are warmhearted and liberal in all this, we most highly approve of their spirit and conduct. And we not only approve, but we highly commend, and, perhaps, make occasions to speak well of such persons, never thinking, however, that they exceed their duty, but that they act as it becomes them to do. Let us, then, remember, that if this is so noble and so much to be commended in others when we are its objects, then we ought to do the same to them, and

to all about us. What we thus approve we should exemplify in our own conduct.

Third, let us consider *how kind God and Christ have been to us,* and how much good we have received from them. Their kindness in things pertaining to this world has been very great. The divine mercies are new to us every morning, and fresh every evening: they are as ceaseless as our being. And still greater good things has God bestowed for our spiritual and eternal good. He has given us what is of more value than all the kingdoms of the earth. He has given his only-begotten and well-beloved Son — the greatest gift he could bestow. And Christ has not only done, but he has suffered, great things, and given himself to die for us; and all freely, and without grudging, or hope of reward. "Though he was rich" with all the riches of the universe, "yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). And what great things hath God done for those of us who are converted, and have been brought home to Christ; delivering us from sin, justifying and sanctifying us, making us kings and priests unto God, and giving us a title "to an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:4). And all this, when we are not good, but evil and unthankful, and in ourselves deserving only of wrath. And,

Fourth, let us consider what *great rewards are promised to those that freely do good to others.* God hath promised that to "the merciful he will show himself merciful" (Psa. 18:25); and there is scarcely any duty spoken of throughout the Bible, that has so many promises of reward as this, whether for this world or the world to come. For this world, as our Savior declares (Acts 20:35) — "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He that gives bountifully, is more blessed in the bountiful gifts that he parts with, than he that receives the bounty. What is bestowed in doing good to others is not lost, as if it were thrown into the ocean. It is rather, as Solomon tells us (Ecc. 11:1), like the seed which the Orientals plant by scattering it on the waters when the floods are up, and which sinking to the bottom, there takes root, and, springing up, is found again in the abundant harvest, after many days. What is so given, is loaned to the Lord (Pro. 19:17), and what we have thus lent him, he will pay us again. And he will not only repay it, but will greatly increase its amount. For if

we give, it is declared (Luke 6:38) that it shall be "given to us again, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Indeed this is the very way to increase; for it is said (Pro. 11:24) — "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty;" and again (Isa. 32:8) "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." What even unregenerate men do give in this way, God often seems to reward with great temporal blessings. His own declaration is (Pro. 28:27), that "he that giveth unto the poor shall not lack;" and the promise is not restricted to the saints: and our observation of providence shows, that men's gifts to the poor are almost as surely prospered of God to themselves, as the seed which they sow in the field. It is easy for God to make up, and more than make up, to us, all that we thus give for the good of others. It is of this very kind of giving, that the apostle tells the Corinthians (2 Cor. 9:6-8) that "he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully;" adding that "God loveth a cheerful giver," and that he "is able to make all grace abound toward them;" that is, to make all their gifts abound to themselves. Many persons do but little consider how much their prosperity depends on providence. And yet, even for this world, it is "the blessing of God that maketh rich" (Pro. 10:22); and of him that considereth the poor, it is written (Psa. 41:1), that "the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." And if we give in the way and with the spirit of Christian charity, we shall thus lay up treasure in heaven, and receive at last the rewards of eternity. This is that laying up of treasures that fail not, of which Christ speaks (Luke 12:33), and as to which he declares (Luke 14:13, 14) that, though the poor whom we benefit cannot recompense us, "we shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. "This, then, is the best way of laying up for time or for eternity. It is the best way of laying up for ourselves, and the best way of laying up for our posterity, for of the good man, who shows favor and lendeth, it is written (Psa. 112) that "his horn shall be exalted with honour," and that "his seed shall be mighty upon earth," and "wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever." And when Christ shall come to judgment, and all people shall be gathered before him, then to those who were kind and benevolent, in the true spirit of Christian love, to the suffering and the poor, he shall say (Mat. 25:34-36, 40), "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, *ye have done it unto me*."

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Love Inconsistent with an Envious Spirit

*"Charity envies not."--**1 Corinthians 13:4***

Having already seen the nature and tendency of Christian charity, or divine love, with respect to the evil received from others, that it "*suffers long,*" and also with respect to doing good to others, that it "*is kind,*" we now come to the feelings and conduct to which the same charity will lead us in respect tothe good possessed by others, and that possessed by ourselves. And in reference to the good possessed by others, the apostle declares it to be the nature and tendency of charity, or true Christian love, not to envy them the possession of any good whatever which is theirs — "*Charity envieth not*." The teaching of these words plainly is,

THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, IS THE VERY OPPOSITE OF AN ENVIOUS SPIRIT.

In dwelling on this thought, I would show, I. What is the nature of an envious spirit; II. Wherein a Christian spirit is the opposite of such a spirit; and, III. The reason and evidence of the doctrine.

I. *The nature of envy*. Envy may be defined to be a spirit of dissatisfaction with, and opposition to, the prosperity and happiness of others as compared with our own. The thing that the envious person is opposed to, and dislikes, is the comparative superiority of the state of

honor, or prosperity or happiness, that another may enjoy, over that which he possesses. And this spirit is especially called envy, when we dislike and are opposed to another's honor or prosperity, because, in general, it is greater than our own, or because, in particular, they have some honor or enjoyment that we have not. It is a disposition natural in men, that they love to be uppermost; and this disposition is directly crossed, when they see others above them. And it is from this spirit that men dislike and are opposed to the prosperity of others, because they think it makes those who possess it superior, in some respect, to themselves. And from this same disposition, a person may dislike another's being equal to himself in honor or happiness, or in having the same sources of enjoyments that he has. For as men very commonly are, they cannot bear a rival much, if any, better than a superior, for they love to be singular and alone in their eminence and advancement. Such a spirit is called envy in the Scriptures. Thus Moses speaks of Joshua's envying for his sake, when Eldad and Medad were admitted to the same privilege with himself in having the spirit of prophecy given them, saying (Num. 11:29), "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" And Joseph's brethren, we are told (Gen. 37:11), envied him when they had heard his dream, which implied that his parents and brethren were yet to bow down before him, and that he was to have power over them. From such a spirit, persons are not only unwilling that others should be above them or equal to them, but that they should be near them. For the desire to be distinguished in prosperity and honor is the more gratified just in proportion as they are elevated, and others are below them, so that their comparative eminence may be marked and visible to all. And this disposition may be exercised, either in reference to the prosperity that others may obtain, and of which they are capable, or in reference to that which they actually have obtained. In the latter form, which is the more common, the feeling of envy will be manifest in two respects: first, in respect to their prosperity, and next, in respect to themselves. And,

1. It will be manifest in an *uneasiness and dissatisfaction with the prosperity of others*. Instead of rejoicing in the prosperity of others, the envious man will be troubled with it. It will be a grievance to his spirit to see them rise so high, and come to such honors and advancement. It is no

comfortable feeling to him to hear of their having obtained such and such advantages and honors and preferments, but, on the contrary, very uncomfortable. He is very much of the spirit of Haman, who, in view of all "the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him," still could say (Est. 5:13), "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king's gate." From such a spirit, the envious person stands ready to rejoice at anything that happens to diminish the honor and comfort of others. He is glad to see them brought down, and will even study how to lower their estate, as Haman did how to humble and bring down Mordecai. And often, like Haman, he will show his uneasiness, not only by planning and scheming, but by actual endeavors of one kind or another, to bring them down; and the very first opportunity of pulling them down that offers, he will gladly embrace. And it is from this disposition, that the sight even of others' prosperity often sets the envious on talking against them and speaking evil of them, even when perhaps they do not know them. Envying them the prominence they have obtained, they hope, by speaking evil of them, in some measure to diminish their honors, and lower them in the esteem of men. This suggests, again,

2. That the opposition of the envious to the prosperity of others will be manifest *in a dislike of their persons for it*. Seeing how others prosper, and what honors they attain, the envious dislike, and even hate them, on account of their honor and prosperity. They entertain and cherish an evil spirit toward them, for no other reason but that they are prospered. They are embittered against them in spirit, only because they are eminent in name or fortune. Thus Haman, it is said (Est. 5:9), "was full of indignation against Mordecai," because he saw him "in the king's gate," and because "he stood not up, nor moved for him;" and Joseph's brethren (Gen. 37:4, 5) "hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him," because his father loved him, and when he had dreamed a dream implying their inferiority, "they hated him yet the more." And so the envious generally resent the prosperity of others, and their coming to honor, as if in it they were guilty of some injury to themselves. Sometimes there is a settled hatred toward others upon this account, leading, as in the case of Joseph's brethren (Gen. 37:19-28), to acts of the greatest

cruelty and wickedness. But this may suffice for the nature of this envy; and I proceed to show,

II. *Wherein a Christian spirit is the opposite of such a spirit of envy*. And,

1. A Christian spirit *disallows of the exercise and expres6ons of such a spirit*. He that is influenced in the course of his life and actions by Christian principles, though he may have envy as well as other corrupt feelings in his heart, yet abhors its spirit, as unbecoming in himself as a Christian, and contrary to the nature and will and spirit of God. He sees it to be a most odious and hateful spirit, and he sees its odiousness not only in others, but also and equally in himself. And therefore, whenever he perceives its emotions rising within him on any occasion, or toward any person, so far as he is influenced by a Christian spirit, he will be alarmed at it, and will fight against it, and will not allow its exercise for a moment. He will not suffer it to break forth and show itself in words or actions. He will be grieved at whatever he sees of its movements in his heart, and will crucify within him the hateful disposition, and do all in his power to go contrary to it in his outward actions.

2. A Christian spirit not only opposes the exercise and outward expressions of an envious spirit, *but it tends to mortify its principle and disposition in the heart*. So far as a Christian spirit prevails, it not only checks the outward actings of envy, but it tends to mortify and subdue the very principle itself in the heart. So that, just in proportion to the power of the former, the individual will cease to feel any inclination to be grieved at the prosperity of others, and still more, will cease to dislike them, or entertain any ill-will toward them on account of it. A Christian spirit disposes us to feel content with our own condition, and with the estate which God has given us among men, and to a quietness and satisfaction of spirit with regard to the allotments and distributions of stations and possessions which God, in his wise and kind providence, has made to ourselves and others. Whether our rank be as high as that of the angels, or as low as that of the beggar at the rich man's gate (Luke 16:20), we shall equally be satisfied with it, as the post in which God hath placed us, and shall equally respect ourselves, if we are endeavoring faithfully to serve him in it. Like the apostle (Phil. 4:11), we shall learn, if we do but

have a Christian spirit, “in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.” But,

3. A Christian spirit not only disallows the exercise and expression of envy, and tends to mortify its principle and disposition in the heart, but *it disposes us to rejoice in the prosperity of others*. It disposes us to a cheerful and habitual compliance with that rule given by the apostle (Rom. 12:15), that we “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;” — *i.e.* that we sympathize with their estate and condition, in the spirit we should feel if it were our own. Such a spirit of benevolence and goodwill will cast out the evil spirit of envy, and enable us to find happiness in seeing our neighbor prospered. I now proceed, as proposed, to show,

III. *The reason and evidence of the doctrine stated; or, to show that it is so, and why it is so, that a Christian spirit is thus the opposite of a spirit of envy*. And this will appear if we consider three things: *first,* how much a spirit and practice contrary to an envious spirit is insisted on in the precepts that Christ has given; *second,* how much the history and doctrines of the gospel hold forth to enforce these precepts; and, *third,* how much a spirit of Christian love will dispose us to yield to the authority of these precepts, and the influence of the motives enforcing them. And,

1. *A spirit and practice entirely contrary to an envious spirit is much insisted on in the precepts of Christ*. — The New Testament is full of precepts of goodwill to others, and of precepts enjoining the principles of meekness, humility, and beneficence, all of which are opposed to a spirit of envy. In addition to these, we have many particular warnings against envy itself. The apostle exhorts (Rom. 13:13) that we “walk honestly, as in the day,... not in strife and *envying;*” and again (1 Cor. 3:3), he blames the Corinthians as being yet carnal, because there was *envying* among them; and still again (2 Cor. 12:20),he mentions his fears concerning them, lest he should find among them *envyings,* and that, too, coupled, as envyings too often are, with “wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults;” and again (Gal. 5:21), *envy* is ranked among the abominable works of the flesh, such as “murders, drunkenness, revellings,” etc.; and again (1 Tim. 6:4), it is condemned as implying great wickedness; and

again (Titus 3:3), it is mentioned as one of the hateful sins that Christians had lived in before their conversion, but which they are now redeemed from, and therefore should confess and forsake. And in the same spirit, the apostle James (Jam. 3:14, 16) speaks of *envy* as exceeding contrary to Christianity, and as connected with every evil work, being earthly, sensual, devilish; and he warns us against it (Jam. 5:9), saying, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door;" and, to quote but one more instance, the apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:1, 2) warns us against all *envies,* as connected with various other evils, and as preventing our growth in divine things. Thus we see that the New Testament is full of precepts which Christ has left us, which enjoin the very opposite of the spirit of envy. And these precepts,

2. *Are strongly enforced by the doctrines and history of the gospel.* If we consider the Christian scheme of *doctrine,* we shall find that it tends strongly to enforce the precepts we have considered. For all of it, from beginning to end, strongly tends to the contrary of an envious spirit. In all its bearings and teachings, the Christian form of doctrine militates against a spirit of envy. The things it teaches as to God are exceeding contrary to it, for there we are told how far God was from begrudging us the most exceeding honor and blessedness, and how he has withheld nothing as too much to be done for us, or as too great or good to be given us. He has not begrudged us his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who was dearer to him than everything beside, nor hath he begrudged us the highest honor and blessedness in and through him. The doctrines of the gospel also teach us how far Christ was from begrudging us anything that he could do for or give us. He did not begrudge us a life spent in labor and suffering, or his own precious blood which he shed for us on the cross, nor will he begrudge us a throne of glory with him in the heavens, where we shall live and reign with him forever. The Christian scheme of doctrine teaches us how Christ came into the world to deliver us from the power of Satan's envy toward us; for the devil, with miserable baseness, envied mankind the happiness that they at first had, and could not bear to see them in their happy state in Eden, and therefore exerted himself to the utmost for their ruin, which he accomplished. And the gospel also teaches how Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and deliver us from that misery into which his envy hath brought us, and to

purify our natures from every trace of the same spirit, that we may be fitted for heaven.

And if; in addition to the doctrine of the gospel, we consider its *history,* we shall find that it also tends greatly to enforce those precepts that forbid envy. And particularly is this true of the history of the life of Christ, and the example he has set us. How far was he from a spirit of envy! How contented in the low and afflictive circumstances in which he voluntarily placed himself for our sakes! And how far was he from envying those that were of worldly wealth and honor, or coveting their condition! He rather chose to continue in his own low estate, and when the multitude, filled with admiration of his teaching and his miracles, on one occasion stood ready to make him a king, he refused the high honor they intended to put upon him, and withdrew himself to be out of their way (John 6:15), and went away into a mountain alone. And when John the Baptist was so greatly honored by the people as a distinguished prophet, and all Judea and Jerusalem went out to hear him, and to be baptized of him, Christ envied him not, but himself went out to be baptized of him in Jordan, though he was John's Lord and Master, and John, as he himself testified, had need to be baptized of him. And so far was he from begrudging to his disciples any honors or privileges as too great for them, that he told and promised them (John 14:12) that, after his death and ascension, they should do greater works than he had done while he remained with them. And, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles, all that he foretold in a little while came true. And,

3. *The true spirit of Christian love will dispose us to yield to the authority of these precepts, and to the influence of the motives enforcing them.* — And the spirit of love will dispose us to this directly, or by its immediate tendency; and indirectly, as it teaches and leads us to humility.

First, Christian love disposes us to hearken to the precepts that forbid envy, and to the gospel motives against it, *by its own immediate tendency*. The nature of charity or Christian love to men is directly contrary to envy. For love does not grudge, but rejoices at the good of those who are loved. And surely love to our neighbor does not dispose us to hate him for his prosperity, or be unhappy at his good. And love to God

also has a direct tendency to influence us to obey his commands. The natural, genuine, uniform fruit of love to God is obedience, and therefore it will tend to obedience to those commands wherein he forbids envy, as much as others, yea, to them more especially, because love delights to obey no commands so much as those that require love. And so love to God will dispose us to follow his example, in that he has not begrudged us our manifold blessings, but has rejoiced in our enjoyment; and it will dispose us to imitate the example of Christ in not begrudging his life for our sakes, and to imitate the example he set us in the whole course of his life on earth. And,

Second, a spirit of Christian love disposes to the same also indirectly, by *inclining us to humility*. It is pride that is the great root and source of envy. It is because of the pride of men's hearts that they have such a burning desire to be distinguished, and to be superior to all others in honor and prosperity, and which makes them so uneasy and dissatisfied in seeing others above them. But a spirit of love tends to mortify pride, and to work humility in the heart. Love to God tends to this, as it implies a sense of God's infinite excellence, and therefore tends to a sense of our comparative nothingness and unworthiness. And love to men tends to a humble behavior among men, as it disposes us to acknowledge the excellencies of others, and that the honors bestowed on them are their due, and to esteem them better than ourselves, and thus more deserving of distinction than we are. But I will not now dwell more particularly on this point, as in a future lecture I shall have occasion more fully to show how Christian love tends to humility.

Passing, then, in conclusion, to the application of the subject, I remark,

1. *It should lead us to examine ourselves, whether we are in any degree under the influence of an envious spirit*. — Let us examine ourselves as to time past, and look over our past behavior among men. Many of us have long been members of human society, having lived by others, and having had to do with them in very many ways, and being connected with them on many occasions, both in public and private affairs. And we have seen others in prosperity, and, it may be, prospering in their affairs more than ourselves. They have had more of the world, and have been possessed of greater riches, and have lived in greater ease, and in much more

honorable circumstances, than we have enjoyed. And perhaps some that heretofore we used to look upon as our equals, or even as inferiors, we may have seen growing in wealth, or advancing in honor and prosperity, while we have been left behind, until now they have reached a station far superior to our own. It may be that we have seen such changes, and been called to bear such trials, through a great part of the course of our life. Certainly we have often seen others abounding in all that the world esteems of value, while we have been comparatively destitute of these things. And now let us inquire how these things have affected us, and how have our hearts stood, and what has been our behavior, in these circumstances. Has there not been a great deal of uneasiness, dissatisfaction, and uncomfortable feeling, and of a desire to see those who were prosperous brought down? Have we not been glad to hear of anything to their disadvantage? And, in the foreboding we have expressed about them, have we not in reality spoken out our wishes? And, in word or deed, have we not been ready to do that which might in some respect lessen their prosperity or honor? Have we ever cherished a bitter or unkind spirit toward another because of his prosperity, or been ready on account of it to look upon him with an evil eye, or to oppose him in public affairs, or, from an envious spirit, to act with the party that might be against him? As we look back on the past, do we not see that in these, and many other kindred things, we have often exercised and allowed an envious spirit? and many times have not our hearts burned with it toward others?

And turning from the past to the present, what spirit do you now find as you search your heart? Do you carry any old grudge in your heart against this or that man that you see sitting with you from Sabbath to Sabbath in the house of God, and from time to time sitting with you at the Lord's table? Is not the prosperity of one and another an eyesore to you? Does it not make your life uncomfortable, that they are higher than you? Would it not be truly a comfort to you to see them brought down, so that their losses and depression would be a source of inward joy and gladness to your heart? And does not this same spirit lead you often to think evil, or to speak with contempt, or unkindness, or severity, of such, to those about you? And let those who are above others in prosperity, inquire whether they do not allow and exercise a spirit of opposition to the

comparative happiness of those below them. Is there not a disposition in you to pride yourself on being above them, and a desire that they should not rise higher, lest they come to be equal or superior to you? And from this are you not willing to see them brought down, and even to help them down to the utmost, lest at some time they may get above you? And does not all this show that you are very much under the influence of an envious spirit?

But it may be that in all this you may justify yourself, not giving it the name of envy, but some other name, and having various excuses for your envious spirit, by which you account yourself justified in its exercise. Some are ready to say of others, that they are not worthy of the honor and prosperity they have: that they have not half the fitness or worthiness of the honor and advancement they have, as many others of their neighbors who are below them. And where, I ask, is the man in the world who envies another for his honor or prosperity, but is ready to think or say, that that other is not worthy of his prosperity and honors? Did Joseph's brethren esteem him worthy of the peculiar love of his father? Did Haman think Mordecai worthy of the honor the king conferred on him? Or did the Jews think the Gentiles worthy of the privileges extended to them under the gospel, when they were so filled with envy on this account, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 13:45 and17:5)? It is generally the case that, when others are promoted to honor, or in any respect come to remarkable prosperity, some are always ready to improve the occasion to tell of their faults, and set forth their unworthiness, and rake up all possible evil about them. Whereas, it is not so much that they have faults, for these would often be unnoticed if they were in obscurity, as it is that they are prospered. Those who talk about their faults are envious of their prosperity, and therefore speak against them. And I would desire such persons as think that they are to be justified in their opposition to others because they are not worthy of their prosperity, diligently to inquire which it is that pains and troubles them most — their neighbors' faults, or their prosperity. If it be their faults, then you would be grieved on account of them, whether the persons were prospered or not, and if truly grieved with their faults, then you would be very slow to speak of them except to themselves, and then in the true spirit of Christian compassion and friendship. But you may say, they make a bad

use of their prosperity and honor; that they are lifted up by it, and cannot bear, or do not know how to manage it; that they are insufferable, and scornful, and there is no doing anything with them in their prosperity, and it is best they should be brought down; that this will tend to humble them, and that the best thing for their own good is, to bring them down to the place where they belong, and which is fittest for them. But here let me urge you strictly to inquire whether you do in truth lament the injury their prosperity does them, and whether you mourn it for their sakes, and because you love them? Do your lamentations spring from pity, or from envy? If you dislike their prosperity because it is not best for them, but does them hurt, then you will grieve for their calamity, and not at their prosperity. You will sincerely love them, and, out of this love, will be heartily sorry for their calamity, and feel a true compassion of heart for them that the disadvantages of their prosperous state are so much greater than its advantages. But is this in truth your real feeling? Do not deceive yourself. Is it their calamity that you are grieved at, or is it merely that they are prospered? Is it that you are grieved for them, that their prosperity injures them, or for yourself, that their prosperity is not yours? And here also let everyone inquire, whether they do not sometimes envy others for their spiritual prosperity. You remember what was the spirit of Cain toward Abel, of the seed of the serpent toward the seed of the woman, of Ishmael toward Isaac, of the Jews toward Christ, of the elder brother toward the prodigal. Beware that you cherish not their spirit; but rather rejoice in the good estate of others, as much as if it were your own.

2. *The subject also exhorts us to disallow and put away everything approaching to an envious spirit.* — So contrary is the spirit of envy to a Christian spirit so evil in itself and so injurious to others, that it should be disallowed and put away by all, and especially by those who profess to be Christians. Great numbers cherish the hope that this is their character, and that they have been endued with a new spirit, even the spirit of Christ. Let it, then, be evident to all, that such is your spirit, by the exercise of that charity that envieth not. In the language of the apostle James (Jam. 3:13-16), “Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter *envying* and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth

not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." The spirit of envy is the very contrary of the spirit of heaven, where all rejoice in the happiness of others; and it is the very spirit of hell itself — which is a most hateful spirit — and one that feeds itself on the ruin of the prosperity and happiness of others, on which account some have compared envious persons to caterpillars, which delight most in devouring the most flourishing trees and plants. And as an envious disposition is most hateful in itself, so it is most uncomfortable and uneasy to its possessor. As it is the disposition of the devil, and partakes of his likeness, so it is the disposition of hell, and partakes of its misery. In the strong language of Solomon (Pro. 14:30), "A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones." It is like a powerful eating cancer, preying on the vitals, offensive and full of corruption. And it is the most foolish kind of self-injury; for the envious make themselves trouble most needlessly, being uncomfortable only because of others' prosperity, when that prosperity does not injure themselves, or diminish their enjoyments and blessings. But they are not willing to enjoy what they have, because others are enjoying also. Let, then, the consideration of the foolishness, the baseness, the infamy of so wicked a spirit, cause us to abhor it, and to shun its excuses, and earnestly to seek the spirit of Christian love, that excellent spirit of divine charity which will lead us always to rejoice in the welfare of others, and which will fill our own hearts with happiness. This love "is of God" (1 John 4:7); and he that dwelleth in it, "dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

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The Spirit of Love is a Humble Spirit

Charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly."--**1 Corinthians 13:4, 5**

Having shown the nature and tendency of charity or Christian love, in respect to our receiving injury, and doing good to others — that it "*suffers long and is kind*;" and also with respect to the good possessed by others as compared with that possessed by ourselves — that charity "*envieth not*;"the apostle now proceeds to show, that in reference to what we ourselves may be or have, charity *is not proud* — that"it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly." As, on the one hand, it prevents us from envying others what they possess, so, on the other, it keeps us from glorying in what we possess ourselves. Paul had just declared that charity was contrary to a spirit of envy, and now he declares that it is equally contrary to that spirit which specially provokes men to envy others, and which they often make a pretense or apology for envying them, viz. that they are puffed up with their honors and prosperity, and vaunt themselves on their possession of these things. When men have obtained prosperity, or are advanced, and others observe that they are puffed up and vaunt themselves in it, this tends to provoke envy, and make others uneasy at the sight of their prosperity. But if a man has prosperity or advancement, and yet does not vaunt himself or behave in an unseemly manner on account of it, this tends to reconcile others to his high circumstances, and make them satisfied that he should enjoy his elevation. As already observed, when men envy another, they are prone to excuse and justify themselves in so doing, by the pretense that he does not make a good improvement of his prosperity, but is proud of it, and puffed up on account of it. But the apostle shows how Christian love, or charity, tends to make all behave suitably to their condition, whatever it may be: if below others, not to envy them, and if above others, not to be proud or puffed up with the prosperity.

In the words of the text, we may observe, that aspirit of Christian love is spoken of as the opposite of a *proud behavior,* and that two degrees of such a behavior are mentioned. The higher degree is expressed by a

man's "vaunting himself," that is, by his so carrying himself as to show plainly that he glories in what he has, or is. The lower degree is expressed by his "behaving himself unseemly," that is, by his not conducting himself in a becoming and decent manner in the enjoyment of his prosperity, but so acting as to show that he thinks the mere fact of his being prosperous exalts him above others. And the spirit of charity or love is spoken of, as opposed not only to a proud behavior, but to a *proud spirit,* or pride in the heart, for charity "is not puffed up." The doctrine we are taught, then, in these words, is this:

THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY, OR CHRISTIAN LOVE, IS AN HUMBLE SPIRIT.

In speaking to this doctrine, I would show — I. What humility is; and, II. How a Christian spirit, or the spirit of charity, is an humble spirit. And,

I. *I would show what humility is.* — Humility may be defined to be a habit of mind and heart corresponding to our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God, or a sense of our own comparative meanness in his sight, with the disposition to a behavior answerable thereto. It consists partly in the understanding, or in the thought and knowledge we have of ourselves, partly in the will, partly in the sense or estimate we have of ourselves, and partly in the disposition we have to a behavior answerable to this sense or estimate. And the first thing in humility is,

1. *A sense of our own comparative meanness.* — I say *comparative* meanness, because humility is a grace proper for beings that are glorious and excellent in very many respects. Thus the saints and angels in heaven excel in humility, and humility is proper and suitable in them, though they are pure, spotless, and glorious beings, perfect in holiness, and

excelling in mind and strength. But though they are thus glorious, yet they have a comparative meanness before God, of which they are sensible; for he is said (Psa. 113:6) to humble himself to behold the things that are in heaven. So the man Christ Jesus, who is the most excellent and glorious of all creatures, is yet meek and lowly of heart, and excels all other beings in humility. Humility is one of the excellencies of Christ, because he is not only God, but man, and as a man he was humble. For humility is not, and cannot be, an attribute of the divine nature. God's nature is indeed infinitely opposite to pride, and yet humility cannot properly be predicated of him. For if it could, this would argue imperfection, which is impossible in God. God, who is infinite in excellence and glory, and infinitely above all things, cannot have any comparative meanness, and of course cannot have any such comparative meanness to be sensible of, and therefore cannot be humble. But humility is an excellence proper to all created intelligent beings, for they are all infinitely little and mean before God, and most of them are in some way mean and low in comparison with some of their fellow creatures. Humility implies a compliance with that rule of the apostle (Rom. 12:3), that we think not of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but that we think soberly, according as God hath dealt to everyone of us the measure, not only of faith, but of other things. And this humility, as a virtue in men, implies a sense of their own comparative meanness, both as compared with God and as compared with their fellow creatures. And,

First, humility doth primarily and chiefly consist in *a sense of our meanness as compared with God,* or a sense of the infinite distance there is between God and ourselves. We are little, despicable creatures, even worms of the dust, and we should feel that we are as nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison with the Majesty of heaven and earth. Such a sense of his nothingness Abraham expressed, when he said (Gen. 18:27), "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." There is no true humility without somewhat of this Spirit; for, however sensible we may be of our meanness as compared with some of our fellow creatures, we are not truly humble unless we have a sense of our nothingness as compared with God. Some have a low

thought of themselves as compared with other men: from the meanness of their circumstances, or from a melancholy and desponding temperament which is natural to them, or from some other cause, while still they know nothing of the infinite distance there is between them and God. Though they may be ready to look upon themselves as humble-spirited, yet they have no true humility. That which above all other things it concerns us to know of ourselves, is what we are in comparison with God, who is our Creator, and the one in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and who is infinitely perfect in all things. And if we are ignorant of our meanness as compared with him, then the most essential thing, and that which is indispensable in true humility, is wanting. But where this is truly felt, there arises from it,

Secondly, a sense of our own meanness as compared with many of our fellow creatures. — For man is not only a mean creature in comparison with God, but he is very mean as compared with multitudes of creatures of a superior rank in the universe, and most men are mean in comparison with many of their fellowmen. And when a sense of this comparative meanness arises from a just sense of our meanness as God sees it, then it is of the nature of true humility. He that has a right sense and estimate of himself in comparison with God, will be likely to have his eyes open to see himself aright in all respects. Seeing truly how he stands with respect to the first and highest of all beings, will tend greatly to help him to a just apprehension of the place he stands in among creatures. And he that does not rightly know the first and greatest of beings, who is the fountain and source of all other beings, cannot truly know anything aright; but so far as he has come to a knowledge of the former, so far is he prepared for and led unto the knowledge of other things, and so of himself as related to others, and as standing among them.

All this would apply to men considered as unfallen beings, and would have been true of our race if our first parents had not fallen, and thus involved their posterity in sin. But humility in *fallen* men implies a sense of a tenfold meanness, both before God and men. Man's *natural*

meanness consists in his being infinitely below God in natural perfection, and in God's being infinitely above him in greatness, power, wisdom, majesty, etc. And a truly humble man is sensible of the small extent of his own knowledge, and the great extent of his ignorance, and of the small extent of his understanding as compared with the understanding of God. He is sensible of his weakness. How little his strength is, and how little he is able to do. He is sensible of his natural distance from God: of his dependence on him, [and] of the insufficiency of his own power and wisdom, and that it is by God's power that he is upheld and provided for, and that he needs God's wisdom to lead and guide him, and his might to enable him to do what he ought to do for him. He is sensible of his subjection to God, and that God's greatness does properly consist in his authority, whereby he is the sovereign Lord and King over all. He is willing to be subject to that authority, as feeling that it becomes him to submit to the divine will, and yield in all things to God's authority. Man had this sort of comparative littleness before the fall. He was then infinitely little and mean in comparison with God. But his natural meanness has become much greater since the fall, for the moral ruin of his nature has greatly impaired his natural faculties, though it has not extinguished them.

The truly humble man, since the fall, is also sensible of his *moral* meanness and vileness. This consists in his sinfulness. His *natural* meanness is his *littleness as a creature,* [while]his *moral* meanness is his *vileness and filthiness as a sinner*. Unfallen man was infinitely distant from God in his natural qualities or attributes. Fallen man is infinitely distant from him also as sinful, and thus filthy. And a truly humble person is in some measure sensible of his comparative meanness in this respect, that he sees how exceedingly polluted he is before an infinitely holy God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean. He sees how pure God is, and how filthy and abominable he is before him. Such a sense of his comparative meanness Isaiah had, when he saw God's glory, and cried out (Isa. 6:5), "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." An humble sense of our

meanness in this respect implies self-abhorrence, such as led Job to exclaim (Job 42:5, 6), “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” It implies, also, such contrition and brokenness of heart as David speaks of when he says (Psa. 51:17), “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise;” and such, too, as Isaiah contemplated when he declared (Isa. 57:15), “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” And both the sense of our own littleness, and the sense of our moral vileness before God, are implied in that poverty of spirit which the Savior speaks of when he says (Mat. 5:3), “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

And in order to this sense of our own meanness and unworthiness that is implied in humility, it is not only necessary that we should know God, and have a sense of his greatness, without which we cannot know ourselves, but we must have a right sense also of his excellence and loveliness. The devils and damned spirits see a great deal of God’s greatness, of his wisdom, omnipotence, etc. God makes them sensible of it by what they see in his dealings, and feel in their own sufferings. However unwilling they are to know it, God makes them know how much he is above them now, and they shall know and feel it still more, at and after the judgment. But they have no humility, nor will they ever have, because, though they see and feel God’s greatness, yet they see and feel nothing of his loveliness. And without this there can be no true humility, for that cannot exist unless the creature feels his distance from God, not only with respect to his greatness, but also his loveliness. The angels amid ransomed spirits in heaven see both these things: not only how much greater God is than they are, but how much more lovely he is also. So that, though they have no absolute defilement and filthiness, as fallen men have, yet, as compared with God, it is said (Job 15:15, and 4:18), “The heavens are not clean in his sight,” and “his angels he charged with folly.” From such a sense of their comparative meanness, persons are

made sensible how unworthy they are of God's mercy or gracious notice. Such a sense Jacob expressed, when he said (Gen. 32:10), "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant;" and David, when he exclaimed (2 Sam. 7:18), "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" And such a sense have all who are truly humble before God. But as humility consists in a sense of our comparative meanness, so it implies,

2. *A disposition to a corresponding behavior and conduct*. — Without this there is no true humility. If it could be so that our understanding could be enlightened to see our own meanness, and at the same time the will and disposition of the soul did not comply with and conform to that which is answerable to our sense of it, but opposed it, then there would be no humility. As was just now said, the devils and damned spirits see much of their comparative littleness before God in some respects. They know that God is infinitely above them in power, and knowledge, and majesty. And yet, not knowing and feeling his loveliness and excellence, their wills and dispositions by no means comply with and conform to what is becoming their meanness, and so they have no humility, but are full of pride. Without pretending to mention everything in our behavior answerable to a proper sense of our meanness and vileness to which humility would dispose us — for that would include the whole of our duty toward God and man — I would specify some things that are worthy of notice, both in reference to God and in reference to man. And,

First, some things *in our behavior toward God* to which humility will dispose us. As the first of these, humility disposes a person *heartily and freely to acknowledge his meanness or littleness before God*. He sees how fit and suitable it is that he should do this, and he does it willingly, and even with delight. He freely confesses his own nothingness and vileness, and owns himself unworthy of any mercy, and deserving of all misery. It is the disposition of the humble soul, to lie low before God, and to humble himself in the dust in his presence. Humility also disposes one

to be distrustful of himself, and to depend only on God. The proud man, that has a high opinion of his own wisdom, or strength, or righteousness, is self-confident. But the humble are not disposed to trust in themselves, but are diffident of their own sufficiency. It is their disposition to rely on God, and with delight to cast themselves wholly on him as their refuge, and righteousness, and strength. The humble man is further disposed *to renounce all the glory of the good he has or does, and to give it all to God.* If there be anything that is good in him, or any good done by him, it is not his disposition to glory or vaunt himself in it before God, but to ascribe all to God, and in the language of the Psalmist (Psa. 115:1) to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." It is the disposition, again, of the humble person, *wholly to subject himself to God.* His heart is not opposed to a full and absolute subjection to the divine will, but inclined to it. He is disposed to be subject to the commands and laws of God, for he sees it to be right and best that he who is so infinitely inferior to God, should be thus subject; and that it is an honor that belongs to God, to reign over, and give laws to him. And he is equally disposed to be subject to the providence and daily disposal of God, and to submit cheerfully to his will as manifested in what he orders for him. Though God orders affliction, and low and depressed circumstances, as his lot in the world, he does not murmur, but feeling his meanness and unworthiness, he is sensible that afflictive and trying dispensations are what he deserves, and that his circumstances are better than he merits. And however dark the divine dealings, with the faith which we so often see manifested in those who are eminent in grace, he is ready to say with Job (Job 13:15),"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And as humility implies a disposition to such a behavior toward God, so,

Secondly, it disposes *to a behavior toward men* answerable to our comparative meanness. And this I shall show by pointing out what kind of behavior humility tends to prevent. And it tends, in the first place, to prevent *an aspiring and ambitious behavior* amongst men. The man that is under the influence of an humble spirit, is content with such a situation amongst men as God is pleased to allot to him, and is not greedy of

honor, and does not affect to appear uppermost and exalted above his neighbors. He acts on the principle of that saying of the prophet (Jer. 45:5),"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" and also of that injunction of the apostle (Rom. 12:16), "Mind not high things." Humility tends also *to prevent an ostentatious behavior*. If the truly humble man has any advantage or benefit of any kind, either temporal or spiritual, above his neighbors, he will not affect to make a show of it. If he has greater natural abilities than others, he will not be forward to parade and display them, or be careful that others shall know his superiority in this respect. If he has a remarkable spiritual experience, he will not be solicitous that men should know it for the sake of the honor he may obtain by it; nor does he affect to be esteemed of men as an eminent saint and a faithful servant of heaven, for it is a small thing with him what men may think of him. If he does anything well, or does his duty in any respect with difficulty and self-denial, he does not affect that men should take notice of it, nor is he careful lest they should not observe it. He is not of the behavior of the Pharisees, who, it is said (Mat. 23:5), did all their works to be seen of men; but if he has done anything in sincerity, he is content that the great Being who sees in secret beholds and will approve it.

Humility tends also to prevent *an arrogant and assuming behavior*. He that is under the influence of an humble spirit is not forward to take too much upon him, and when he is amongst others, he does not carry it toward them as if he expected and insisted that a great deal of regard should be shown to himself. His behavior does not carry with it the idea that he is the best amongst those about him, and that he is the one to whom the chief regard should be shown, and whose judgment is most to be sought and followed. He does not carry it as if he expected that everybody should bow and truckle to him, and give place to him, as if no one was of as much consequence as himself. He does not put on assuming airs in his common conversation, nor in the management of his business, nor in the duties of religion. He is not forward to take upon himself that which does not belong to him, as though he had power where indeed he has not, as if the earth ought to be subject to his bidding, and must

comply with his inclination and purposes. On the contrary, he gives all due deference to the judgment and inclinations of others, and his behavior carries with it the impression, that he sincerely receives and acts on that teaching of the apostle (Phil. 2:3),"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." In talking of the things of religion, he has not the air, either in his speech or behavior, of one that esteems himself one of the best saints in the whole company, but he rather carries himself as if he thought, in the expression of the apostle (Eph. 3:8), that he was "less than the least of all saints."

Humility tends also *to prevent a scornful behavior*. Treating others with scorn and contempt is one of the worst and most offensive manifestations of pride toward them. But they that are under the influence of an humble spirit are far from such a behavior. They do not despise or look down on those that are below them with a haughty supercilious air, as though they were scarce worthy to come nigh them or to have any regard from them. They are sensible that there is no such vast difference between themselves and their fellowmen as warrants such a behavior. They are not found treating with scorn and contempt what others say, or speaking of what they do with ridicule and sneering reflections, or sitting and relating what others may have spoken or done, only to make sport of it. On the contrary, humility disposes a person to a condescending behavior to the meekest and lowest, and to treat inferiors with courtesy and affability, as being sensible of his own weakness and despicableness before God, and that it is God alone that makes him in any respect to differ from others, or gives him the advantage over them. The truly humble will (Rom. 12:16) always have the spirit to "condescend to men of low estate." Even if they are great men, and in places of public trust and honor, humility will dispose them to treat their inferiors in such a manner as has been spoken of, and not in a haughty and scornful manner, as vaunting themselves on their greatness.

Humility tends also *to prevent a willful and stubborn behavior*. They

that are under the influence of an humble spirit will not set up their own will either in public or private affairs. They will not be stiff and inflexible, and insist that everything must go according to what they happen first to propose, and manifest a disposition by no means to be easy, but to make all the difficulty they can, and to make others uneasy as well as themselves, and to prevent anything being done with any quietness, if it be not according to their own mind and will. They are not as some that the apostle Peter describes (2 Pet. 2:10), presumptuous and self-willed, always bent on carrying their own points, and, if this cannot be done, then bent on opposing and annoying others. On the contrary, humility disposes men to be of a yielding spirit to others, ready, for the sake of peace, and to gratify others, to comply in many things with their inclinations, and to yield to their judgments wherein they are not inconsistent with truth and holiness. A truly humble man is inflexible in nothing but in the cause of his Lord and Master, which is the cause of truth and virtue. In this he is inflexible, because God and conscience require it. But in things of lesser moment, and which do not involve his principles as a follower of Christ, and in things that only concern his own private interests, he is apt to yield to others. And if he sees that others are stubborn and unreasonable in their willfulness, he does not allow that to provoke him to be stubborn and willful in his opposition to them, but he rather acts on the principles taught in such passages as Rom. 12:19; 1 Cor. 6:7; Mat. 5:40, 41; "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." "Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

Humility will further tend *to prevent a leveling behavior*. Some persons are always ready to level those above them down to themselves, while they are never willing to level those below them up to their own position. But he that is under the influence of humility will avoid both these extremes. On the one hand, he will be willing that all should rise just so far as their diligence and worth of character entitle them to, and on the other hand, he will be willing that his superiors should be known and

acknowledged in their place, and have rendered to them all the honors that are their due. He will not desire that all should stand upon the same level, for he knows it is best that there should be gradations in society: that some should be above others, and should be honored and submitted to as such. And therefore he is willing to be content with this divine arrangement, and, agreeably to it, to conform both his spirit and behavior to such precepts as the following: “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Rom. 13:7); “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1).

Humility also tends, once more, *to prevent a self-justifying behavior*. He that is under the influence of an humble spirit, if he has fallen into a fault, as all are liable at some time to fall, or if in anything he has injured another, or dishonored the Christian name and character, will be willing to acknowledge his fault, and take the shame of it to himself. He will not be hard to be brought to a sense of his fault, nor to testify that sense by a suitable acknowledgment of his error. He will be inwardly humbled for it, and ready to show his humility in the manner which the apostle points out, when he says (Jam. 5:16), “Confess your faults one to another.” It is pride that makes men so exceedingly backward to confess their fault when they have fallen into one, and that makes them think that to be their shame which is in truth their highest honor. But humility in the behavior makes men prompt to their duty in this respect, and if it prevails as it should, will lead them to do it with alacrity and even delight. And when anyone shall give such a person a Christian admonition or reproof for any fault, humility will dispose him to take it kindly, and even thankfully. It is pride that makes men to be so uneasy when they are reproved by any of their neighbors, so that oftentimes they will not bear it, but become angry, and manifest great bitterness of spirit. Humility, on the contrary, will dispose them not only to tolerate such reproofs, but to esteem and prize them as marks of kindness and friendship. “Let the righteous smite me,” says the Psalmist (Psa. 141:5), “it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall

not break my head."

Having thus shown what humility is in its nature, and to what it will lead us both in spirit and behavior, in respect both to God and to our fellowmen, I proceed, as proposed, to show,

In the application of this subject we may see,

1. *The excellency of a Christian spirit.* — "The righteous," it is said (Pro. 12:26), "is more excellent than his neighbour." And much of this excellence in the true Christian consists in his meek and lowly spirit, which makes him so like his Savior. This spirit the apostle speaks of (1Pet. 3:4) as the richest of all ornaments, "even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The subject should lead us,

2. *To examine ourselves, and see* if *we are indeed of an humble spirit.* — "His soul," says the prophet (Hab. 2:4), "which is lifted up, is not upright in him;" and the fact that "God resisteth the proud" (Jam. 4:6), or, as in the original, "sets himself in battle array against him," shows how he abhors a proud spirit. And it is not every show and appearance of humility that will stand the test of the gospel. There are various imitations of it that fall short of the reality. Some put on an affected humility. Others have a natural low-spiritedness, and are wanting in manliness of character. Others are melancholy or despondent, [while] others, under the convictions of conscience, by which, for the time, they are depressed, seem broken in spirit. Others seem greatly abased while in adversity and affliction, or have a natural melting of the heart under the common illuminations of the truth. In others, there is a counterfeit kind of humility, wrought by the delusions of Satan: and all of these may be

mistaken for true humility. Examine yourself, then, and see what is the nature of your humility, whether it be of these superficial kinds, or whether it be indeed wrought by the Holy Spirit in your hearts. Do not rest satisfied, till you find that the spirit and behavior of those whom the gospel accounts humble, are yours.

3. *The subject exhorts those who are strangers to the grace of God, to seek that grace, that they may thus attain to this spirit of humility.* — If such be your character, you are now destitute of a Christian spirit, which is a spirit of grace, and so wholly destitute of humility. Your spirit is a proud spirit, and though you may not seem to carry yourself very proudly amongst men, yet you are lifting yourself up against God, in refusing to submit your heart and life to him. And in doing this, you are disregarding or defying God's sovereignty, and daring to contend with your Maker, though he dreadfully threatens those who do this. You are proudly casting contempt on God's authority, in refusing obey it and continuing to live in disobedience, in refusing to be conformed to his will and to comply with the humbling conditions and way of salvation by Christ, and in trusting to your own strength and righteousness, instead of that which Christ so freely offers. Now, as to such a spirit, consider that this is, in an especial sense, the sin of devils. "Not a novice," says the apostle (1 Tim. 3:6), "lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." And consider, too, how odious and abominable such a spirit is to God, and how terribly he has threatened it; declaring (Pro. 16:5) that "every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished;" and again (Pro. 6:16), "These things doth the Lord hate: a proud look," etc.; and again (Pro. 29:23), that "a man's pride shall bring him low;" and (2 Sam. 22:28) that the eyes of the Lord are upon the haughty, that he may bring them down; and still again (Isa. 23:9), that "the Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." Consider, too, how Pharaoh, and Korah, and Haman, and Belshazzar, and Herod, were awfully punished for their pride of heart and conduct. Be admonished, by their example, to cherish an humble spirit, and to walk humbly with God, and toward men. Finally,

4. *Let all be exhorted earnestly to seek much of an humble spirit, and to endeavor to be humble in all their behavior toward God and men.* — Seekfor a deep and abiding sense of your comparative meanness before God and man. Know God. Confess your nothingness and ill-desert before him. Distrust yourself. Rely only on God. Renounce all glory except from him. Yield yourself heartily to his will and service. Avoid an aspiring, ambitious, ostentatious, assuming, arrogant, scornful, stubborn, willful, leveling, self-justifying behavior; and strive for more and more of the humble spirit that Christ manifested while he was on earth. Consider the many motives to such a spirit. Humility is a most essential and distinguishing trait in all true piety. It is the attendant of every grace, and in a peculiar manner tends to the purity of Christian feeling. It is the ornament of the spirit, the source of some of the sweetest exercises of Christian experience, the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer to God, the subject of the richest of his promises, [and] the spirit with which he will dwell on earth, and which he will crown with glory in heaven hereafter. Earnestly seek, then, and diligently and prayerfully cherish, an humble spirit, and God shall walk with you here below, and when a few more days shall have passed, he will receive you to the honors bestowed on his people at Christ's right hand.

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The Spirit of Love the Opposite of a Selfish Spirit

"Charity . . . seeks not her own" -- **1 Corinthians 13:5**

Having shown the nature of charity in respect to the good of others, in the two particulars, that it is kind to them, and envies not their enjoyments and blessings; and also in respect to our own good, that it is not proud, either in spirit or behavior — I pass to the next point presented by the

apostle, viz. that charity "*seeketh not her own*." The doctrine of these words plainly is,

THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY, OR CHRISTIAN LOVE, IS THE OPPOSITE OF A SELFISH SPIRIT.

The ruin that the fall brought upon the soul of man consists very much in his losing the nobler and more benevolent principles of his nature, and falling wholly under the power and government of self-love. Before, and as God created him, he was exalted, and noble, and generous; but now he is debased, and ignoble, and selfish. Immediately upon the fall, the mind of man shrank from its primitive greatness and expandedness, to an exceeding smallness and contractedness; and as in other respects, so especially in this. Before, his soul was under the government of that noble principle of divine love, whereby it was enlarged to the comprehension of all his fellow creatures and their welfare. And not only so, but it was not confined within such narrow limits as the bounds of the creation, but went forth in the exercise of holy love to the Creator, and abroad upon the infinite ocean of good, and was, as it were, swallowed up by it, and became one with it. But so soon as he had transgressed against God, these noble principles were immediately lost, and all this excellent enlargedness of man's soul was gone; and thenceforward he himself shrank, as it were, into a little space, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of all things else. Sin, like some powerful astringent, contracted his soul to the very small dimensions of selfishness; and God was forsaken, and fellow creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself, and became totally governed by narrow and selfish principles and feelings. Self-love became absolute master of his soul, and the more noble and spiritual principles of his being took wings and flew away. But God, in mercy to miserable man, entered on the work of redemption, and, by the glorious gospel of his Son, began the work of bringing the soul of man out of its confinement and contractedness, and back again to those noble and divine principles by which it was animated and governed at first. And it is through the cross of Christ that he is doing this; for our union with Christ gives us participation in his nature. And so Christianity restores an excellent enlargement, and extensiveness, and liberality to the soul, and again possesses it with that divine love or

charity that we read of in the text, whereby it again embraces its fellow creatures, and is devoted to and swallowed up in the Creator. And thus charity, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, so partakes of the glorious fullness of the divine nature, that she "seeketh not her own," or is *contrary to selfish spirit*. In dwelling on this thought, I would, first, show the nature of that selfishness of which charity is the opposite; then how charity is opposed to it; and then some of the evidence in support of the doctrine stated.

I. *I would show the nature of that selfishness of which charity is the opposite*. — And here I would observe,

1. *Negatively, that charity, or the spirit of Christian love, is not contrary to all self-love*. — It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a man should love himself, or, which is the same thing, should love his own happiness. If Christianity did indeed tend to destroy a man's love to himself, and to his own happiness, it would therein tend to destroy the very spirit of humanity; but the very announcement of the gospel, as a system of peace on earth and goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14), shows that it is not only not destructive of humanity, but in the highest degree promotive of its spirit. That a man should love his own happiness, is as necessary to his nature as the faculty of the will is; and it is impossible that such a love should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being. The saints love their own happiness. Yea, those that are perfect in happiness, the saints and angels in heaven, love their own happiness; otherwise that happiness which God hath given them would be no happiness to them; for that which anyone does not love he cannot enjoy any happiness in.

That to love ourselves is not unlawful, is evident also from the fact, that the law of God makes self-love a rule and measure by which our love to others should be regulated. Thus Christ commands (Mat. 19:19), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which certainly supposes that we may, and must, love ourselves. It is not said *more* than thyself, but *as* thyself. But we are commanded to love our neighbor next to God; and therefore we are to love ourselves with a love next to that which we

should exercise toward God himself. And the same appears also from the fact, that the Scriptures, from one end of the Bible to the other, are full of motives that are set forth for the very purpose of working on the principle of self-love. Such are all the promises and threatenings of the Word of God, its calls and invitations, its counsels to seek our own good, and its warnings to beware of misery. These things can have no influence on us in any other way than as they tend to work upon our hopes or fears. For to what purpose would it be to make any promise of happiness, or hold forth any threatening of misery, to him that has no love for the former or dread of the latter? Or what reason can there be in counseling him to seek the one, or warning him to avoid the other? Thus it is plain, negatively, that charity, or the spirit of Christian love, is not contrary to *all* self-love. But I remark still further,

2. *Affirmatively, that the selfishness which charity, or* a *Christian spirit, is contrary to, is only an inordinate self-love.* — Here, however, the question arises, In what does this inordinateness consist? This is a point that needs to be well stated and clearly settled; for the refutation of many scruples and doubts that persons often have, depends upon it. And therefore I answer,

First, that the inordinateness of self-love *does not consist in our love of our own happiness being, absolutely considered, too great in degree.* — I do not suppose it can be said of any, that their love to their own happiness, if we consider that love absolutely and not comparatively, *can* be in too high a degree, or that it is a thing that is liable either to increase or diminution. For I apprehend that self-love, in this sense, is not a result of the fall, but is necessary, and what belongs to the nature of all intelligent beings, and that God has made it alike in all; and that saints, and sinners, and all alike, love happiness, and have the same unalterable and instinctive inclination to desire and seek it. The change that takes place in a man, when he is converted and sanctified, is not that his love for happiness is diminished, but only that it is regulated with respect to its exercises and influence, and the courses and objects it leads to. Who will say that the happy souls in heaven do not love happiness as truly as the miserable spirits in hell? If their *love* of happiness is diminished by their being made holy, then that will diminish their *happiness* itself; for

the less anyone loves happiness, the less he relishes it, and, consequently, is the less happy.

When God brings a soul out of a miserable state and condition into a happy state, by conversion, he gives him happiness that before he had not, but he does not at the same time take away any of his love of happiness. And so, when a saint increases in grace, he is made still more happy than he was before; but his love of happiness, and his relish of it, do not grow less as his happiness itself increases, for that would be to increase his happiness one way, and to diminish it another. But in every case in which God makes a miserable soul happy, or a happy soul still more happy, he continues the same love of happiness that existed before. And so, doubtless, the saints ought to have as much of a principle of love to their own happiness, or love to themselves, which is the same thing, as the wicked have. So that, if we consider men's love of themselves or of their own happiness absolutely, it is plain that the inordinateness of self-love does not consist in its being in too great a degree, because it is alike in all. But I remark,

Secondly, that the inordinateness of self-love, wherein a corrupt selfishness does consist, lies in two things: — *in its being too great comparatively;* and *in placing our happiness in that which is confined to self*. In the first place, the degree of self-love may be too great *comparatively,* and so the degree of its influence be inordinate. Though the degree of men's love of their own happiness, taken absolutely, may in all be the same, yet the proportion that their love of self bears to their love for others may not be the same. If we compare a man's love of himself with his love for others, it may be said that he loves himself too much — that is, in proportion too much. And though this may be owing to a defect of love to others, rather than to an excess of love to himself, yet self-love, by this excess in its proportion, itself becomes inordinate in this respect, viz. that it becomes inordinate in its influence and government of the man. For though the principle of self-love, in itself considered, is not at all greater than if there is a due proportion of love to God and to fellow creatures with it, yet, the proportion being greater, its influence and government of the man become greater; and so its influence becomes inordinate by reason of the weakness or absence of other love that should

restrain or regulate that influence.

To illustrate this, we may suppose the case of a servant in a family, who was formerly kept in the place of a servant, and whose influence in family affairs was not inordinate while his master's strength was greater than his; and yet, if afterward the master grows weaker and loses his strength, and the rest of the family lose their former power, though the servant's strength be not at all increased, yet, the proportion of his strength being increased, his influence may become inordinate, and, from being in subjection and a servant, he may become master m that house. And so self-love becomes inordinate. Before the fall, man loved himself, or his own happiness, as much as after the fall; but then, a superior principle of divine love had the throne, and was of such strength, that it wholly regulated and directed self-love. But since the fall, the principle of divine love has lost its strength, or rather is dead; so that self-love, continuing in its former strength, and having no superior principle to regulate it, becomes inordinate in its influence, and governs where it should be subject, and only a servant. Self-love, then, may become inordinate in its influence by being comparatively too great, either by love to God and to fellow creatures being too small, as it is in the saints, who in this world have great remaining corruption, or by its being none at all, as is the case with those who have no divine love in their hearts. Thus the inordinateness of self-love, with respect to the degree of it, is not as it is considered absolutely, but comparatively, or with respect to the degree of its influence. In some respects wicked men do not love themselves enough — not so much as the godly do; for they do not love the way of their own welfare and happiness; and in this sense it is sometimes said of the wicked that they hate themselves, though, in another sense, they love self too much.

It is further true, in the second place, that self-love, or a man's love to his own happiness, may be inordinate, *in placing that happiness in things that are confined to himself*. In this case, the error is not so much in the degree of his love tohimself as it is in the channel in which it flows. It is not in the degree in which he loves his own happiness, but in his placing his happiness where he ought not, and in limiting and confining his love. Some, although they love their own happiness, do not place that

happiness in their own confined good, or in that good which is limited to themselves, but more in the common good — in that which is the good of others, or in the good to be enjoyed in and by others. A man's love of his own happiness, when it runs in this last channel, is not what is called selfishness, but is the very opposite of it. But there are others who, in their love to their own happiness, place that happiness in good things that are confined or limited to themselves, to the exclusion of others. And this is selfishness. This is the thing most clearly and directly intended by that self-love which the Scripture condemns. And when it is said that charity seeketh not her own, we are to understand it of her own private good — good limited to herself. The expression, "her own," is a phrase of appropriation, and properly carries in its signification the idea of limitation to self. And so the like phrase in Phil. 2:21, that "all seek their own," carries the idea of confined and self-appropriated good, or the good that a man has singly and to himself, and in which he has no communion or partnership with another, but which he has so circumscribed and limited to himself as to exclude others. And so the expression is to be understood in 2 Tim. 3:2, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves;" for the phrase is of the most confined signification, limited to self alone, and excluding all others.

A man may love himself as much as one can, and may be, in the exercise of a high degree of love to his own happiness, ceaselessly longing for it, and yet he may so place that happiness, that, in the very act of seeking it, he may be in the high exercise of love to God; as, for example, when the happiness that he longs for, is to enjoy God, or to behold his glory, or to hold communion with him. Or a man may place his happiness in glorifying God. It may seem to him the greatest happiness that he can conceive of, to give God glory, as he may do; and he may long for this happiness. And in longing for it, he loves that which he looks on as his happiness; for if he did not love what in this case he esteemed his happiness, he would not long for it; and to love his happiness is to love himself. And yet, in the same act, he loves God, because he places his happiness in God; for nothing can more properly be called love to any being or thing, than to place our happiness in it. And so persons may place their happiness considerably in the good of others — their neighbors, for instance — and, desiring the happiness that consists in

seeking their good, they may, in seeking it, love themselves and their own happiness. And yet this is not selfishness, because it is not a confined self-love; but the individual's self-love flows out in such a channel as to take in others with himself. The self that he loves is, as it were, enlarged and multiplied, so that, in the very acts in which he loves himself, he loves others also. And this is the Christian spirit, the excellent and noble spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the nature of that divine love, or Christian charity, that is spoken of in the text. And a Christian spirit is contrary to that selfish spirit which consists in the self-love that goes out after such objects as are confined and limited — such as a man's worldly wealth, or the honor that consists in a man's being set up higher in the world than his neighbors, or his own worldly ease and convenience, or his pleasing and gratifying his own bodily appetites and lusts.

Having thus stated what that selfishness is that a Christian spirit is contrary to, I pass, as proposed, to show,

II. *How the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is contrary to such a spirit.* — And this may be shown in these two particulars: that the spirit of charity, or Christian love, leads us to seek not only our own things, but those of others; and that it disposes us, in many cases, to forego or part with our own things for the sake of others. And,

1. *The spirit of charity, or love, leads those who possess it to seek not only their own things, but the things of others.*

First, such a spirit seeks to *please and glorify God.* The things that are well-pleasing to God and Christ, and that tend to the divine glory, are called the things of Christ, in opposition to our own things; as where it is said (Phil. 2:21), "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Christianity requires that we should make God and Christ our main end; and all Christians, so far as they live like Christians, live so that "for them to live is Christ." Christians are required to live so as to please God, and so as to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will

of God" (Rom. 12:2). We should be such servants of Christ as do in all things seek to please our Master, as says the apostle (Eph. 6:6) — "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." And so we are required in all things (1 Cor. 10:31), whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God. And this, surely, is a spirit which is the opposite of self-seeking.

Secondly, they that have the spirit of charity, or Christian love, have a spirit to seek *the good of their fellow creatures*. Thus the apostle commands (Phil. 2:4), "Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others." We ought to seek the spiritual good of others; and if we have a Christian spirit, we shall desire and seek their spiritual welfare and happiness, their salvation from hell, and that they may glorify and enjoy God forever. And the same spirit will dispose us to desire and seek the temporal prosperity of others, as says the apostle (1 Cor. 10:24), "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." And we should so seek their pleasure, that therein we can, at the same time, seek their profit, as again it is said by the apostle (1 Cor. 10:33), "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;" and again Rom. 15:2), "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

But more particularly, under this head, I would remark, that a spirit of charity, or Christian love, as exercised toward our fellow creatures, is opposite to a selfish spirit, *as it is a sympathizing and merciful spirit*. It disposes persons to consider not only their own difficulties, but also the burdens and afflictions of others, and the difficulties of their circumstances, and to esteem the case of those who are in straits and necessities as their own. A person of selfish spirit is ready to make much of the afflictions that he himself is under, as if his privations or sufferings were greater than those of anybody else; and if he is not in suffering, he is ready to think he is not called to spare what he has in possession, for the sake of helping others. A selfish man is not apt to discern the wants of others, but rather to overlook them, and can hardly be persuaded to see or feel them. But a man of charitable spirit is apt to see the afflictions of others, and to take notice of their aggravation, and to be filled with

concern for them, as he would be for himself if under difficulties. And he is ready, also, to help them, and take delight in supplying their necessities, and relieving their difficulties. He rejoices to obey that injunction of the apostle (Col. 3:12), “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness;” and to cherish the spirit of “wisdom (Jam. 3:17) that is from above,” which is “full of mercy;” and, like the good man spoken of by the Psalmist (Psa. 37:26), to be “merciful,” that is, full of mercy.

And as it is a sympathizing and merciful spirit, so the spirit of charity, as exercised toward our fellow creatures, is the opposite of a selfish, inasmuch *as it is a liberal spirit*. It not only seeks the good of others that are in affliction, but it is ready to communicate to all, and forward to promote their good, as there may be opportunity. To do good, and to communicate, it forgets not (Heb. 13:16); but obeys the exhortation (Gal. 6:10), “As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men.” But on this point I need not enlarge, having already dwelt upon it at length in the lecture on “Charity is kind.”

And as the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is opposed to a selfish spirit, in that it is merciful and liberal so it is in this, also, that it *disposes a person to be public-spirited*. A man of a right spirit is not a man of narrow and private views, but is greatly interested and concerned for the good of the community to which he belongs, and particularly of the city or village in which he resides, and for the true welfare of the society of which he is a member. God commanded the Jews that were carried away captive to Babylon, to seek the good of that city, though it was not their native place, but only the city of their captivity. His injunction was (Jer. 29:7), “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it.” And a man of truly Christian spirit will be earnest for the good of his country, and of the place of his residence, and will be disposed to lay himself out for its improvement. A man was recommended to Christ by the Jews (Luke 7:5), as one that loved their nation and had built them a synagogue; and it is spoken of as a very provoking thing to God, with respect to some in Israel (Amos 6:6),that they were “not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” And it is recorded, to the everlasting honor of Esther (Est. 4:16), that she herself

fasted and prayed, and stirred up others to fast and pray, for the welfare of her people. And the apostle Paul (Rom. 9:1-3) expresses the deepest concern for the welfare of his countrymen. And those that are possessed of the spirit of Christian charity are of a more enlarged spirit still; for they are concerned, not only for the thrift of the community, but for the welfare of the Church of God, and of all the people of God individually. Of such a spirit was Moses, the man of God, and therefore he earnestly interceded for God's visible people, and declared himself ready to die that they might be spared (Exo. 32:11, 32). And of such a spirit was Paul, who was so concerned for the welfare of all, both Jews and Gentiles, that he was willing to become as they were (1 Cor. 9:19-23), if possibly he might save some of them.

Especially will the spirit of Christian love dispose those that stand in a public capacity, such as that of ministers, and magistrates, and all public officers, to seek the public good. It will dispose magistrates to act as the fathers of the commonwealth, with that care and concern for the public good which the father of a family has for his household. It will make them watchful against public dangers, and forward to use their powers for the promotion of the public benefit; not being governed by selfish motives in their administration; not seeking only, or mainly, to enrich themselves, or to become great, and to advance themselves on the spoils of others, as wicked rulers very often do; but striving to act for the true welfare of all to whom their authority extends. And the same spirit will dispose ministers not to seek their own, and endeavor to get all they can out of their people to enrich themselves and their families, but to seek the good of the flock over which the great Shepherd has placed them; to feed, and watch over them, and lead them to good pastures, and defend them from wolves and wild beasts that would devour them. And so, whatever the post of honor or influence we may be placed in, we should show that, in it, we are solicitous for the good of the public, so that the world may be better for our living in it, and that, when we are gone, it may be said of us, as it was so nobly said of David (Acts 13:36), that we "served our generation by the will of God." But,

2. *The spirit of charity, or love, also disposes us, in many cases, to forego and part with our own things, for the sake of others.* — It disposes us to

part with our own private temporal interest, and totally and freely to renounce it, for the sake of the honor of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Such was the spirit of the apostle Paul when he exclaimed (Acts 21:13), "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And the same spirit will dispose us often to forego or part with our own private interest for the good of our neighbors. It will make us ready on every occasion to aid or help them, leading us willingly to part with a lesser good of our own, for the sake of a greater good to them. And the case may even be such (1 John 3:16), that "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." But I will not dwell longer on this point now, as I shall probably have occasion to speak more to it under some other part of the context. I pass, then, as proposed,

III. *To notice some of the evidence sustaining the doctrine which has been stated.* — And the truth of the doctrine, that the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is the opposite of a selfish spirit, will appear, if we consider the nature of love in general, the peculiar nature of Christian or divine love, and the nature of Christian love to God and to man in particular. And,

1. *The nature of love in general.* — This, so far as it is really and truly sincere, is of a diffusive nature, and espouses the interests of others. It is so with the love of natural affection, and earthly friendship. So far as there is any real affection or friendship, the parties between which it subsists do not seek only their own particular interests, but do espouse and seek the interests of each other. They seek not only their own things, but the things of their friends. Selfishness is a principle that contracts the heart, and confines it to self, while love enlarges it, and extends it to others. By love, a man's self is so extended and enlarged, that others, so far as they are beloved, do, as it were, become parts of himself so that, wherein their interest is promoted, he believes his own is promoted, and wherein theirs is injured, his also is injured. And still further will this appear, if we consider,

2. *The peculiar nature of Christian or divine love.* — Of charity, or Christian love, it is peculiarly true, that it is above the selfish principle. Though all real love to others seeks the good and espouses the interests of those who are beloved, yet all other love, excepting this, has its foundation, in one sense, in the selfish principle. So it is with the natural affection which parents feel for their children, and with the love which relatives have one to another. If we except the impulses of instinct, self-love is the mainspring of it. It is because men love themselves, that they love those persons and things that are their own, or that they are nearly related to, and which they look upon as belonging to themselves, and which, by the constitution of society, have their interest and honor linked with their own. And so it is in the closest friendships that exist among men. Self-love is the spring whence they proceed. Sometimes natural gratitude, for good turns that have been done them by others, or for benefits received from them, disposes men, through self-love, to a similar respect to those that have shown them kindness, or by whom their self-interest has been promoted. And sometimes natural men are led into a friendship to others, from qualifications that they see or find in them, whence they hope for the promotion of their own temporal good. If they see that others are disposed to be respectful to them, and to give them honor, then love to their own honor will lead them to friendship with such; or if they see them generously disposed to them, then love to their own profit will dispose them to friendship to them on this account; or if they find in them a great agreement with themselves in disposition and manners, self-love may dispose them to amity with them on account of the enjoyment they have in their society, or because this agreement with them in their temper and ways carries with it the approbation of their own temper and ways. And so there are many other ways in which self-love is the source of that love and friendship that often arises between natural men. Most of the love that there is in the world arises from this principle, and therefore it does not go beyond nature. And nature cannot go beyond self-love, but all that men do, is, some way or other, from this root.

But divine love, or the charity that is spoken of in the text, is something above self-love, as it is something supernatural, or above and beyond all that is natural. It is not a branch that springs out of the root of self-love,

as natural affection, and worldly friendships, and the love that men may have to one another, as such, do. But as self-love is the offspring of natural principles, so divine love is the offspring of supernatural principles. The latter is something of a higher and nobler kind than any plant that grows naturally in such a soil as the heart of man. It is a plant transplanted into the soul out of the garden of heaven, by the holy and blessed Spirit of God, and so has its life in God, and not in self. And therefore there is no other love so much above the selfish principle as Christian love is; no love that is so free and disinterested, and in the exercise of which God is so loved for himself and his own sake, and men are loved, not because of their relation to self, but because of their relation to God as his children, and as those who are the creatures of his power, or under the influence of his Spirit. And therefore divine love, or charity, above all love in the world, is contrary to a selfish spirit. Other, or natural love, may in some respects be contrary to selfishness, inasmuch as it may, and often does, move men to much liberality and generosity to those they love; and yet, in other respects, it agrees with a selfish spirit, because, if we follow it up to its original, it arises from the same root, viz. a principle of self-love. But divine love has its spring where its root is — in Jesus Christ; and so it is not of this world, but of a higher; and it tends thither, whence it came. And as it does not spring out of self, so neither does it tend to self. It delights in the honor and glory of God, for his own sake, and not merely for the sake of self; and it seeks and delights in the good of men, for their sake, and for God's sake. And that divine love is, indeed, a principle far above and contrary to a selfish spirit, appears further from this, viz. that it goes out even to enemies; and that it is its nature and tendency to go out to the unthankful and evil, and to those that injure and hate us — which is directly contrary to the tendency of a selfish principle, and entirely above nature — less man-like than God-like. That Christian love, or charity, is contrary to a selfish spirit, is further plain,

3. *From the nature of this love to God and to man in particular*. And,

First, from the nature of this love to *God*. Ifwe consider what the Scriptures tell us of the nature of love to God, we find that they teach that those who truly love God, love him so as wholly to devote themselves to

him and his service. This we are taught in the sum of the ten commandments, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). In these words is contained a description of a right love to God; and they teach us, that those who love him aright do devote themselves wholly to him. They devote all to him: all their heart, and all their soul, and all their mind, and all their strength, or all their powers and faculties. Surely a man who gives all this wholly to God, keeps nothing back, but devotes himself wholly and entirely to him, making no reserve; and all who have true love to God have a spirit to do this. This shows how much a principle of true love to God is above the selfish principle. For if self be devoted wholly to God, then there is something, above self, that overcomes it; something superior to self, that takes self, and makes an offering of it to God. A selfish principle never devotes itself to another. The nature of it is, to devote all others to self. They that have true love to God, love him as God, and as the Supreme Good; whereas it is the nature of selfishness to set up self in the place of God, and to make an idol of self. That being whom men regard supremely, they devote all to. They that idolize self, devote all to self; but they that love God as God, devote all to him.

That Christian love, or charity, is contrary to a selfish spirit, will further appear, if we consider what the Scriptures teach,

Secondly, of the nature of this love *to man*. And there are two chief and most remarkable descriptions that the Bible gives us of a truly gracious love to our neighbors, each of which should be noticed.

The *first* of these is the requirement that we love our neighbor as ourselves. This we have in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18) — “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and this Christ cites (Mat. 22:39), as the sum of all the duties of the second table of the law. Now this is contrary to selfishness, for love is not of such a nature as confines the heart to self, but leads it forth to others as well as self, and in like manner as to self. It disposes us to look upon our neighbors as being, as it were, one with ourselves; and not only to consider our own circumstances and interests, but to consider the wants of our neighbors, as we do our own; not only to have regard to our own desires, but to the desires of others, and to do to

them as we would have them do to us.

And the *second* remarkable description which the Scriptures give us of Christian charity, which shows how contrary it is to selfishness, is, that of loving others as Christ hath loved us. "A new commandment," says Christ (John 13:34), "I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." It is called a new commandment, as contradistinguished from that old one (Lev. 19:18), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Not that the duty of love to others, which is the matter of the commandment, was new, for the same kind of love was required of old, under the Old Testament, which is required now. But it is called a new commandment, in this respect, that the rule and motive annexed, which we are now more especially to have an eye to, in these days of the gospel, are new. The rule and motive more especially set in view of old, was, our love to ourselves — that we should love our neighbor *as ourselves*. But the motive and rule more especially set in view now, in these days of the gospel, and since the love of Christ has been so wonderfully manifested, is the love of Christ to us — that we should love our neighbor *as Christ hath loved* us. It is here called a new commandment; and so in John 15:12, Christ calls it *his* commandment, saying emphatically, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." That we should love one another as we love ourselves, is Moses' commandment; but that we should love one another as Christ hath loved us, is the commandment of God our Savior. It is the same commandment, as to the substance of it, that was given of old, but with new light shining upon it from the love of Jesus Christ, and a new enforcement annexed to it, by him, beyond what Moses annexed. So that this rule, of loving others as Christ has loved us, does more clearly, and in a further degree, show us our duty and obligation with respect to loving our neighbors, than as Moses stated it.

But to return from this digression, let us consider how this description that Christ gives of Christian love to others shows it to be the contrary of selfishness, by considering in what manner Christ has expressed love to us, and how much there is in the example of his love to enforce the contrary of a selfish spirit. And this we may see in *four* things: —

First, Christ has set his love on *those that were his enemies*. There was

not only no love to himself in those on whom he set his love, but they were full of enmity and of a principle of actual hatred to him. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,” or, as in the next verse but one, “enemies,” “Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, 10).

Second, such was Christ’s love to us, that he was pleased, *in some respects, to look on us as himself.* By his love to us, if we will but accept his love, he has so espoused us, and united his heart to us, that he is pleased to speak of us and regard us as himself. His elect were, from all eternity, dear to him as the apple of his eye. He looked upon them so much as himself, that he regarded their concerns as his, and their interests as his own; and he has even made their guilt as his, by a gracious assumption of it to himself, that it might be looked upon as his own, through that divine imputation in virtue of which they are treated as innocent, while he suffers for them. And his love has sought to unite them to himself, so as to make them, as it were, members of his body, so that they are his flesh and his bones, as he himself seems to say in Mat. 25:40, when he declares, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Third, such was the love of Christ to us, that he did, as it were, *spend himself for our sakes.* His love did not rest in mere feeling, nor in light efforts and small sacrifices, but though we were enemies, yet he so loved us, that he had a heart to deny himself, and undertake the greatest efforts, and undergo the greatest sufferings, for our sakes. He gave up his own ease, and comfort, and interest, and honor, and wealth; and became poor, and outcast, and despised, and had not where to lay his head, and all for us! And not only so, but he shed his own blood for us, and offered himself a sacrifice to God’s justice, that we might be forgiven, and accepted, and saved! And,

Fourth, Christ thus loved us, *without any expectation of ever being requited by us for his love.* He did not stand in need of anything we could do for him, and well knew that we should never be able to requite him for his kindness to us, or even to do anything toward it. He knew that we were poor, miserable, and empty-handed outcasts, who might receive from him, but could render nothing to him in return. He knew that we had no money or price with which to purchase anything, and that he must

freely give is all things that we needed, or else we should be eternally without them. And shall not we be far from a selfish spirit, and utterly contrary to it, if we love one another after such a manner as this, or if we have the same spirit of love toward others that was in Christ toward ourselves? If this is our spirit, our love to others will not depend on their love to us, but we shall do as Christ did to us love them even though they are enemies. We shall not only seek our own things, but we shall in our hearts be so united to others, that we shall look on their things as our own. We shall endeavor to be interested in their good, as Christ was in ours; and shall be ready to forego and part with our own things, in many cases, for the things of others, as Christ did toward us. And these things we shall be willing and ready to do for others, without any expectation of being repaid by them, as Christ did such great things for us without any expectation of requital or return. If such be our spirit, we shall not be under the influence of a selfish spirit, but shall be unselfish in principle, and heart, and life.

In the application of this subject, the great use I would make of it is, *to dissuade all from a selfish spirit and practice, and to exhort all to seek that spirit and live that life which shall be contrary to it*. Seek that by divine love your heart may be devoted to God and to his glory, and to loving your neighbor as yourself, or rather as Christ has loved you. Do not seek everyone your own things, but everyone also the things of others. And, that you may be stirred up to this, in addition to the motives already presented, consider three things: —

First, that you are not your own. — As you have not made yourself, so you were not made *for* yourself. You are neither the *author* nor the *end* of your own being. Nor is it you that uphold yourself in being, or that provide for yourself, or that are dependent on yourself. There is another that hath made you, and preserves you, and provides for you, and on whom you are dependent: and He hath made you for himself, and for the good of your fellow creatures, and not only for yourself. He has placed before you higher and nobler ends than self, even the welfare of your

fellowmen, and of society, and the interests of his kingdom; and for these you ought to labor and live, not only in time, but for eternity.

And if you are Christians, as many of you profess to be, then, in a peculiar sense, "ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price," even "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Pet. 1:19). And this is urged as an argument why Christians should not seek themselves, but the glory of God; for the apostle adds, "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." By nature you were in a miserable, lost condition, a captive in the hands of divine justice, and a miserable slave in the bondage of sin and Satan. And Christ has redeemed you, and so you are his by purchase. By a most just title you belong to him, and not to yourself. And, therefore, you must not henceforth treat yourself as your own, by seeking your own interests or pleasure only, or even chiefly; for if you do so, you will be guilty of robbing Christ. And as you are not your own, so nothing that you have is your own. Your abilities of body and mind, your outward possessions, your time, talents, influence, comforts — none of them are your own; nor have you any right to use them as if you had an absolute property in them, as you will be likely to do if you imagine them only for your own private benefit, and not for the honor of Christ and for the good of your fellowmen. Consider,

Second, how you, by your very profession as a Christian, are united to Christ and to your fellow-Christians. — Christ and all Christians are so united together, that they all make but one body; and of this body Christ is the head, and Christians are the members. "We, being many," says the apostle, "are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" Rom. 12:5); and again, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free" (1 Cor. 12:13). How unbecoming, then, is it in Christians to be selfish, and concerned only for their own private interests! In the natural body, the hand is ready to serve the head, and all the members are ready to serve one another. Is what the hands do, done only for their own advantage? Are they not continually employed as much for the other parts of the body as for themselves? Is not the work they are doing, from day to day, for the common good of the whole body? And so it may be said as to the eye, the teeth, the feet, that they are all employed, not for themselves or for their

own limited and partial welfare, but for the common comfort and good of the whole body. And if the head be dishonored, are not all the members of the body at once employed and active to remove the dishonor, and to put honor upon the head? And if any members of the body are wounded, and languishing, and in pain, are not all the members of the body at once engaged to screen that weak or suffering member? Are not the eyes employed in looking about for it, and the ears in attending to the directions of physicians, and the feet in going where relief is to be sought, and the hands in applying the remedies provided? So it should be with the Christian body. All its members should be helpers and comforts to each other, and thus promote their mutual welfare and happiness, and the glory of Christ the head. Once more, consider,

Third, that, in seeking the glory of God and the good of your fellow creatures, you take the surest way to have God seek your interests and promote your welfare. — If you will devote yourself to God, as making a sacrifice of all your own interests to him, you will not throw yourself away. Though you seem to neglect yourself, and to deny yourself, and to overlook self in imitating the divine benevolence, *God will take care of you;* and he will see to it that your interest is provided for, and your welfare made sure. You shall be no loser by all the sacrifices you have made for him. To his glory be it said, he will not be your debtor, but will requite you a hundred-fold even in this life, beside the eternal rewards that he will bestow upon you hereafter. His own declaration is, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold” (the other evangelist adds, “in this present time”), “and shall inherit everlasting life” (Mat. 19:29); and the spirit of this declaration applies to all sacrifices made for Christ, or for our fellowmen for his sake. The greatness of the reward for this life Christ expresses by a definite number; but he does not God make use of numbers, however great, to set forth the reward promised them hereafter. He only says they shall receive everlasting life, because the reward is so great, and so much exceeds all the expense and self-denial persons can be at for Christ’s sake, that no numbers are sufficient to describe it.

If you are selfish, and make yourself and your own private interests your

idol, God will leave you to yourself, and let you promote your own interests as well as you can. But if you do not selfishly seek your own, but do seek the things that are Jesus Christ's, and the things of your fellow-beings, then God will make your interest and happiness his own charge, and he is infinitely more able to provide for and promote it than you are. The resources of the universe move at his bidding, and he can easily command them all to subserve your welfare. So that, not to seek your own, in the selfish sense, is the best way of seeking your own in a better sense. It is the directest course you can take to secure your highest happiness. When you are required not to be selfish, you are not required, as has been observed, not to love and seek your own happiness, but only not to seek mainly your own private and confined interests. But if you place your happiness in God, in glorifying him, and in serving him by doing good, — in this way, above all others, will you promote your wealth, and honor, and pleasure here below, and obtain hereafter a crown of unfading glory, and pleasures forevermore at God's right hand. If you seek, in the spirit of selfishness, to grasp all as your own, you shall lose all, and be driven out of the world at last, naked and forlorn, to everlasting poverty and contempt. But if you seek not your own, but the things of Christ, and the good of your fellowmen, God himself will be yours, and Christ yours, and the Holy Spirit yours, and all things yours. Yes, "all things" shall be yours; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21, 22).

Let these things, then, incline us all to be less selfish than we are, and to seek more of the contrary most excellent spirit. Selfishness is a principle native to us, and, indeed, all the corruption of our nature does radically consist in it; but considering the knowledge that we have of Christianity, and how numerous and powerful the motives it presents, we ought to be far less selfish than we are, and less ready to seek our own interests and these only. How much is there of this evil spirit, and how little of that excellent, noble, diffusive spirit which has now been set before us! But whatever the cause of this, whether it arise from our having too narrow notions of Christianity, and from our not having learned Christ as we ought to have done, or from the habits of selfishness handed down to us from our fathers, — whatever the cause be, let us strive to overcome it,

that we may grow in the grace of an unselfish spirit, and thus glorify God, and do good to men.

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The Spirit of Love the Opposite of An Angry or Wrathful Spirit

"Charity . . . is not easily provoked." -- 1 Corinthians 13:5

Having declared that charity is contrary to the two great cardinal vices of pride and selfishness, those deep and ever-flowing fountains of sin and wickedness in the heart, the apostle next proceeds to show that it is also contrary to two things that are commonly the fruits of this pride and selfishness, viz. an angry spirit, and a censorious spirit. To the first of these points I would now turn your attention, viz. that charity "*is not easily provoked*." The doctrine here set before us is,

THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY, OR CHRISTIAN LOVE, IS THE OPPOSITE OF AN ANGRY OR WRATHFUL SPIRIT OR DISPOSITION.

In speaking to this doctrine, I would inquire, first, in what consists that angry spirit or temper to which a Christian spirit is contrary; and, next, give the reason why a Christian spirit is contrary to it.

I. *What is that angry or wrathful spirit to which charity, or a Christian spirit, is contrary*? — It is not all manner of anger that Christianity is opposite and contrary to. It is said in Eph. 4:26, "Be ye angry, and sin not;" which seems to suppose that there is such a thing as anger without sin, or that it is possible to be angry in some cases, and yet not offend God. And therefore it may be answered, in a single word, that a Christian spirit, or the spirit of charity, is opposite to all undue and unsuitable

anger. But anger may be undue or unsuitable in four respects: in its nature, its occasion, its end, and its measure. And,

1. *Anger may be undue and unsuitable in respect to its nature.* — Anger may be defined to be an earnest and more or less violent opposition of spirit against any real or supposed evil, or in view of any fault or offense of another. All anger is opposition of the mind against real or supposed evil; but it is not all opposition of the mind against evil that is properly called anger. There is an opposition of the judgment, that is not anger; for anger is the opposition, not of the cool judgment, but of the spirit of the man, that is, of his disposition or heart. But here, again, it is not all opposition of the spirit against evil that can be called anger. There is an opposition of the spirit against *natural* evil that we suffer, as in grief and sorrow, for instance, which is a very different thing from anger; and in distinction from this, anger is opposition to *moral* evil, or evil real or supposed, in voluntary agents, or at least in agents that are conceived to be voluntary, or acting by their own will, and against such evil as is supposed to be their fault. But yet again, it is not all opposition of spirit against evil, or faultiness in voluntary agents, that is anger; for there may be a dislike, without the spirit being excited and angry; and such dislike is an opposition of the will and judgment, and not always of the feelings — and in order to anger, the latter must be moved. In all anger there must he earnestness and opposition of feeling, and the spirit must be moved and stirred within us. Anger is one of the passions or affections of the soul, though, when called an affection, it is, for the most part, to be regarded as an evil affection.

Such being the nature of anger in general, it may now be shown wherein anger is undue or unsuitable in its nature. And this is the case with all anger that contains ill-will, or a desire of revenge. Some have defined anger to be a desire of revenge. But this cannot be considered a just definition of anger in general; for if so, there would be no anger that would not imply ill-will, and the desire that some other might be injured. But doubtless there is such a thing as anger that is consistent with goodwill; for a father may be angry with his child, that is, he may find in himself an earnestness and opposition of spirit to the bad conduct of his child, and his spirit may be engaged and stirred in opposition to that

conduct, and to his child while continuing in it; and yet, at the same time, he will not have any proper ill-will to the child, but on the contrary, a real goodwill; and so far from desiring its injury, he may have the very highest desire for its true welfare, and his very anger be but his opposition to that which he thinks will be of injury to it. And this shows that anger, in its general nature, rather consists in the opposition of the spirit to evil than in a desire of revenge.

If the nature of anger in general consisted in ill-will and a desire of revenge, no anger would be lawful in any case whatever; for we are not allowed to entertain ill-will toward others in any case, but are to have goodwill to all. We are required by Christ to wish well to and pray for the prosperity of all, even our enemies, and those that despitefully use us and persecute us (Mat. 5:44); and the rule given by the apostle is, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Rom. 12:14); that is, we are only to wish good and pray for good to others, and in no case to wish evil. And so all revenge is forbidden, if we except the vengeance which public justice takes on the transgressor, in inflicting which men act not for themselves, but for God. The rule is, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18); and says the apostle, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). So that all the anger that contains ill-will or a desire of revenge, is what Christianity is contrary to, and by the most fearful sanctions forbids. Sometimes anger, as it is spoken of in the Scripture, is meant only in the worst sense, or in that sense of it which implies ill-will and the desire of revenge; and in this sense all anger is forbidden, as in Eph. 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;" and again, in Col. 3:8, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Thus anger may be irregular and sinful with respect to its nature. And so,

2. *Anger may* be *unsuitable and unchristian in respect to it's occasion.* — And such unsuitableness consists in its being without any just cause. Of this Christ speaks when he says, "Whosoever is angry with his brother

without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Mat. 5:22). And this may be the case in three ways: —

First, when the occasion of anger is that which *is no fault at all in the person that is its object*. This is not infrequently the case. Many persons are of such a proud and peevish disposition, that they will be angry at anything that is in any respect against them, or troublesome to them, or contrary to their wishes, whether anybody be to blame for it or not. And so sometimes men are angry with others for those things that are not from their fault, but which happen merely through their involuntary ignorance, or through their impotence. They are angry that they have not done better, when the only cause was, that the circumstances were such that they could not do otherwise than they did. And oftentimes persons are angry with others, not only for that which is no fault in them, but for that which is really good, and for which they ought to be praised. So it always is when men are angry at God, and fret at his providence and its dispensations toward them. Thus to be fretful and impatient, and to murmur against God's dealings, is a most horribly wicked kind of anger. And yet this very often is the case in this wicked world. This is what the wicked Israelites were so often guilty of, and for which so many of them were overthrown in the wilderness; and this was what Jonah, though a good man, was guilty of when he was angry with God without a cause angry for that for which he should have praised God, viz. his great mercy to the Ninevites. Oftentimes, also, persons' spirits are kept very much in a fret by reason of things going contrary to them, and their meeting with crosses and disappointments and entanglements in their business, when they will not own that it is God they fret at and are angry with, and do not even seem to be convinced of it themselves. But, indeed, such fretfulness can be interpreted no other way; and whatever they may pretend, it is ultimately aimed against the Author of providence — against the God who orders these cross events, so that it is a murmuring and fretting against him.

And it is a common thing, again, for persons to be angry with others for their doing well, and that which is only their duty. There never was so much bitterness and fierceness of anger among men one to another, and so much hostility and malice, for any one thing, as there has been for

well-doing. History gives no accounts of any such cruelties as those practiced toward God's people on account of their profession and practice of religion. And how annoyed were the scribes and Pharisees with Christ for doing the will of his Father in what he did and said while on earth! When men are angry with others, or with civil or ecclesiastical authorities, for proceeding regularly against them for their errors or sins, they are angry with them for well-doing. And this is the case when they are angry with their neighbors or brethren in the church for bearing a due testimony against them, and endeavoring to bring them to justice when the case requires it. Often men are angry with others not only for well-doing, but for doing those things that are acts of friendship to them, as when we are angry with others for administering Christian reproof for anything they observe in us that is wrong. This the Psalmist said he should accept as a kindness — "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness;" but such as are angry with it, foolishly and sinfully take it as an injury. In all these things, our anger is undue and unreasonable with regard to its occasion, when that occasion is no fault of the one with whom we are angry. And so,

Second, anger is unsuitable and unchristian as to its occasion, *when persons are angry upon small and trivial occasions,* and when, though there be something of blame, yet the fault is very small, and such as is not worth our being stirred and engaged about. God does not call us to have our spirits ceaselessly engaged in opposition, and stirred up in anger, unless it be on some important occasions. He that is angry at every little fault he may see in others, is certainly one with whom it is otherwise than is expressed in the text. Of him that is provoked at every little, trifling thing, it surely cannot be said that he is "not easily provoked." Some are of such an angry, fretful spirit, that they are put out of humor by every little thing, and by things in others, in the family, or in society, or in business, that are no greater faults than they themselves are guilty of every day. Those that will thus be angry at every fault they see in others, will be sure to be always kept in a fret, and their minds will never be composed; for it cannot be expected in this world but that we shall continually be seeing faults in others, as there are continually faults in ourselves. And therefore it is that Christians are directed to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jam. 1:19); and that it is said, that "He that is soon

angry, dealeth foolishly." He that diligently guards his own spirit will not be very frequently or easily angry. He wisely keeps his mind in a calm, clear frame, and does not suffer it to be stirred with anger, except on extraordinary occasions, and those that do especially call for it. And again,

Third, anger may be unsuitable and unchristian in its occasion, *when our spirits are stirred at the faults of others chiefly as they affect ourselves, and not as they are against God.* We should never be angry but at sin, and this should always be that which we oppose in our anger. And when our spirits are stirred to oppose this evil, it should be *as* sin, or chiefly as it is against God. If there be no sin and no fault, then we have no cause to be angry; and if there be a fault or sin, then it is infinitely worse as against God than it is as against us, and therefore it requires the most opposition on that account. Persons sin in their anger when they are selfish in it; for we are not to act as if we were our own, or for ourselves simply, since we belong to God, and not to ourselves. When a fault is committed wherein God is sinned against, and persons are injured by it, they should be chiefly concerned, and their spirits chiefly moved against it, because it is against God; for they should be more solicitous for God's honor than for their own temporal interests. All anger, as to occasion, is either a virtue or a vice, for there is no middle sort, that is neither good nor bad; but there is no virtue or goodness in opposing sin, unless it be opposed *as* sin. The anger that is virtuous is the same thing which, in one form, is called zeal. Our anger should be like Christ's anger. He was like a lamb under the greatest personal injuries, and we never read of his being angry but in the cause of Godagainst sin as sin. And this should be the case with us. And as anger may, in these three ways, be unsuitable and unchristian with respect to the occasion or cause of it, so,

3. *It may be undue and sinful with respect to its end.* — And this in two particulars.

First, when we are angry *without considerately proposing any end* to be gained by it. In this way it is that anger is rash and inconsiderate, and that it is suffered to rise, and be continued, without any consideration or motive. Reason has no hand in the matter; but the passions go before the reason, and anger is suffered to rise before even a thought has been given

to the question, of what advantage or benefit will it be, either to me or others? Such anger is not the anger of men, but the blind passion of beasts: it is a kind of beastly fury, rather than the affection of a rational creature. All things in the soul of man should be under the government of reason, which is the highest faculty of our being; and every other faculty and principle in the soul should be governed and directed by that to its proper end. And, therefore, when our anger is of this kind, it is unchristian and sinful. And so it is,

Second, when we allow ourselves to be angry *for any wrong end*. Though reason would tell us, with regard to our anger, that it cannot be for the glory of God, or of any real benefit to ourselves, but, on the other hand, much to the mischief of ourselves or others, yet, because we have in view the gratification of our own pride, or the extension of our influence, or getting in some way superiority to others, we allow anger as aiding to gain these or other ends, and thus indulge a sinful spirit. And, lastly,

4. *Anger may be unsuitable and unchristian with respect to its measure*. — And this, again, in two particulars, as tothe measure of its degree, and the measure of its continuance. And,

First, when it is immoderate *in degree*. Anger may be far beyond what the case requires. And often it is so great as to put persons beyond the control of themselves, their passions being so violent, that, for the time, they know not what they do, and seem to be unable to direct and regulate either their feelings or conduct. Sometimes men's passions rise so high that they are, as it were, drunk with them, so that their reason is gone, and they act as if beside. themselves. But the degree of anger ought always to be regulated by the end of it, and it should never be suffered to rise any higher than so far as tends to the obtaining of the good ends which reason has proposed. And anger is also beyond measure, and thus sinful,

Second, when it is immoderate *in its continuance*. It is a very sinful thing for persons to be long angry. The wise man not only gives us the injunction, "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry," but he adds, that "anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecc. 7:9); and, says the apostle, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph.

4:26). If anger be long continued, it soon degenerates into malice, for the leaven of evil spreads faster than the leaven of good. If a person allows himself long to hold anger towards another, he will quickly come to hate him. And so we find that it actually is among those that retain a grudge in their hearts against others for week after week, and month after month, and year after year. They do, in the end, truly hate the persons against whom they thus lay up anger, whether they own it or not. And this is a most dreadful sin in the sight of God. All, therefore, should be exceedingly careful how they suffer anger long to continue in their hearts.

Having thus shown what is that angry or wrathful spirit to which charity or a Christian spirit is contrary, I pass, as proposed, to show,

II. *How charity, or a Christian spirit, is contrary to it.* — And this I would do by showing, first, that charity or love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, is directly, and in itself, contrary to the anger that is sinful; and, secondly, that the fruits of charity which are mentioned in the context, are all contrary to it. And,

1. *Christian charity, or love,* is *directly, and in itself, contrary to all undue* anger. — Christian love is contrary to anger which is undue in its nature, and that tends to revenge, and so implies ill-will; for the nature of love is goodwill. It tends to prevent persons from being angry without just cause, and will be far from disposing anyone to be angry for but little faults. Love is backward to anger, and will not yield to it on trivial occasions, much less where there is no cause for being angry. It is a malignant and evil, and not a loving spirit, that disposes persons to be angry without cause. Love to God is opposite to a disposition in men to be angry at others' faults chiefly as they themselves are offended and injured by them: it rather disposes them to look at them chiefly as committed against God. If love be in exercise, it will tend to keep down the irascible passions, and hold them in subjection, so that reason and the spirit of love may regulate them and keep them from being immoderate in degree, or of long continuance. And not only is charity, or Christian love, directly and in itself contrary to all undue anger, but,

2 *All the fruits of this charity which are mentioned in the context are also contrary to* it. — And I shall mention only two of these fruits, as they

may stand for all, viz. those virtues that are contrary to pride and selfishness. And

First, love, or charity, is contrary to all undue and sinful anger, as, *in its fruits, it is contrary to pride*. Pride is one chief cause of undue anger. It is because men are proud, and exalt themselves in their own hearts, that they are revengeful, and are apt to be excited, and to make great things out of little ones that may be against themselves. Yea, they even treat as vices things that are in themselves virtues, when they think their honor is touched, or when their will is crossed. And it is pride that makes men so unreasonable and rash in their anger, and raises it to such a high degree, and continues it so long, and often keeps it up in the form of habitual malice. But, as we have already seen, love, or Christian charity, is utterly opposed to pride. And so,

Secondly, love, or charity, is contrary to all sinful anger, as*, in its fruits, it is contrary to selfishness*. It is because men are selfish and seek their own, that they are malicious and revengeful against all that oppose or interfere with their own interests. If men sought not chiefly their own private and selfish interests, but the glory of God and the common good, then their spirit would be a great deal more stirred up in God's cause than in their own; and they would not be prone to hasty, rash, inconsiderate, immoderate, and long-continued wrath, with any who might have injured or provoked them; but they would in a great measure forget themselves for God's sake, and from their zeal for the honor of Christ. The end they would aim at, would be, not making themselves great, or getting their own will, but the glory of God and the good of their fellow-beings. But love, as we have seen, is opposed to all selfishness.

In the application of this subject, let us use it,

1. *In the way of self-examination*. — Ourown consciences, if faithfully searched and imperatively inquired of, can best tell us whether we are, or have been persons of such an angry spirit and wrathful disposition as has

been described; whether we are frequently angry, or indulge in ill-will, or allow the continuance of anger. Have we not often been angry? And if so, is there not reason to think that that anger has been undue, and without just cause, and thus sinful? God does not call Christians into his kingdom that they may indulge greatly in fretfulness, and have their minds commonly stirred up and ruffled with anger. And has not most of the anger you have cherished been chiefly, if not entirely, on your own account? Men are often wont to plead zeal for religion, and for duty, and for the honor of God, as the cause of their indignation, when it is only their own private interest that is concerned and affected. It is remarkable how forward men are to appear, as if they were zealous for God and righteousness, in cases wherein their honor, or will, or interest has been touched, and to make pretense of this in injuring others or complaining of them; and what a great difference there is in their conduct in other cases, wherein God's honor is as much or a great deal more hurt, and their own interest is not specially concerned. In the latter case, there is no such appearance of zeal and engagedness of spirit, and no forwardness to reprove and complain, and be angry, but often a readiness to excuse, and leave reproof to others, and to be cold and backward in anything like opposition to the sin.

And ask, still further, what good has been obtained by your anger, and what have you aimed at in it? or have you even thought of these things? There has been a great deal of anger and bitterness in things passing in this town on public occasions, and many of you have been present on such occasions; and such anger has been manifest in your conduct, and I fear rested in your bosoms. Examine yourselves as to this matter, and ask what has been the nature of your anger. Has not most, if not all of it, been of that undue and unchristian kind that has been spoken of? Has it not been of the nature of ill-will, and malice, and bitterness of heart — an anger arising from proud and selfish principles, because your interest, or your opinion, or your party was touched? Has not your anger been far from that Christian zeal that does not disturb charity, or embitter the feelings, or lead to unkindness or revenge in the conduct? And how has it been with respect to your holding anger? Has not the sun more than once gone down upon your wrath, while God and your neighbor knew it? Nay, more, has it not gone down again and again, through month after month,

and year after year, while winter's cold hath not chilled the heat of your wrath, and the summer's sun hath not melted you to kindness? And are there not some here present that are sitting before God with anger laid up in their hearts, and burning there? Or, if their anger is for a time concealed from human eyes, is it not like an old sore not thoroughly healed, but so that the least touch renews the smart; or like a smothered fire in the heaps of autumn leaves, which the least breeze will kindle into a flame? And how is it in your families? Families are societies the most closely united of all; and their members are in the nearest relation, and under the greatest obligations to peace, and harmony, and love. And yet what has been your spirit in the family? Many a time have you not been fretful, and angry, and impatient, and peevish, and unkind to those whom God has made in so great a measure dependent on you, and who are so easily made happy or unhappy by what you do or say — by your kindness or unkindness? And what kind of anger have you indulged in the family? Has it not often been unreasonable and sinful, not only in its nature, but in its occasions, where those with whom you were angry were not in fault, or when the fault was trifling or unintended, or where, perhaps, you were yourself in part to blame for it? and even where there might have been just cause, has not your wrath been continued, and led you to be sullen, or severe, to an extent that your own conscience disapproved? And have you not been angry with your neighbors who live by you, and with whom you have to do daily? and on trifling occasions, and for little things, have you not allowed yourself in anger toward them? In all these points it becomes us to examine ourselves, and know what manner of spirit we are of, and wherein we come short of the spirit of Christ.

2. *The subject dissuades from, and warns against, all undue and sinful anger.* — The heart of man is exceeding prone to undue and sinful anger, being naturally full of pride and selfishness; and we live in a world that is full of occasions that tend to stir up this corruption that is within us, so that we cannot expect to live in any tolerable measure as Christians would do, in this respect, without constant watchfulness and prayer. And we should not only watch against the exercises, but fight against the principle of anger, and seek earnestly to have *that* mortified in our hearts, by the establishment and increase of the spirit of divine love and humility in our souls. And to this end, several things may be considered. And,

First, consider frequently *your own failings, by which you have given both God and man occasion to be displeased with you.* All your lifetime you have come short of God's requirements, and thus justly incurred his dreadful wrath; and constantly you have occasion to pray God that he will not be angry with you, but will show you mercy. And your failings have also been numerous toward your fellowmen, and have often given them occasion to be angry with you. Your faults are as great, perhaps, as theirs: and this thought should lead you not to spend so much of your time in fretting at the motes in their eyes, but rather to occupy it in pulling the beams out of your own. Very often those that are most ready to be angry with others, and to carry their resentments highest for their faults, are equally or still more guilty of the same faults. And so those that are most apt to be angry with others for speaking evil of them, are often most frequent in speaking evil of others, and even in their anger to vilify and abuse them. If others, then, provoke us, instead of being angry with them, let our first thoughts be turned to ourselves, and let it put us on self-reflection, and lead us to inquire whether we have not been guilty of the very same things that excite our anger, or even of worse. Thus, thinking of our own failings and errors would tend to keep us from undue anger with others. And consider, also,

Second, how such undue anger *destroys the comfort of him that indulges it*. It troubles the soul in which it is, as a storm troubles the ocean. Such anger is inconsistent with a man's enjoying himself, or having any true peace or self-respect in his own spirit. Men of an angry and wrathful temper, whose minds are always in a fret, are the most miserable sort of men, and live a most miserable life; so that a regard to our own happiness should lead us to shun all undue and sinful anger. Consider, again,

Third, how much such a spirit *unfits persons for the duties of religion*. All undue anger indisposes us for the pious exercises and the active duties of religion. It puts the soul far from that sweet and excellent frame of spirit in which we most enjoy communion with God, and which makes truth and ordinances most profitable to us. And hence it is that God commands us not to approach his altars while we are at enmity with others, but "first to be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer our gift" (Mat. 5:24); and that by the apostle it is said, "I will, therefore,

that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). And, once more, consider,

Fourth, that *angry men are spoken of in the Bible as unfit for human society*. The express direction of God is, "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (Pro. 22:24, 25). Such a man is accursed, as a pest of society, who disturbs and disquiets it, and puts everything into confusion. "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (Pro. 29:22). Every one is uncomfortable about him; his example is evil, and his conduct disapproved alike by God and men. Let these considerations, then, prevail with all, and lead them to avoid an angry spirit and temper, and to cultivate the spirit of gentleness, and kindness, and love, which is the spirit of heaven.

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The Spirit of Love the Opposite of a Censorious Spirit

"Charity . . . thinks no evil." -- ***1 Corinthians 13:5***

Having remarked how charity, or Christian love, is opposed not only to pride and selfishness, but to the ordinary fruits of these evil dispositions, viz. an angry spirit and a censorious spirit, and having already spoken as to the former, I come now to the latter. And in respect to this, the apostle declares, that charity "*thinketh no evil*." The doctrine set forth in these words isclearly this:

THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHARITY, OR CHRISTIAN LOVE, IS

THE OPPOSITE OF A CENSORIOUS SPIRIT

or, in other words, it is contrary to a disposition to think or judge uncharitably of others.

Charity, in one of the common uses of the expression, signifies a disposition to think the best of others that the case will allow. This, however, as I have shown before, is not the scriptural meaning of the word *charity,* but only one way of its exercise, or one of its many and rich fruits. Charity is of vastly larger extent than this. It signifies, as we have already seen, the same as Christian or divine love, and so is the same as the Christian spirit. And, in accordance with this view, we here find the spirit of charitable judging mentioned among many other good fruits of charity, and here expressed, as the other fruits of charity are in the context, *negatively,* or by denying the contrary fruit, viz. censoriousness, or a disposition uncharitably to judge or censure others. And in speaking to this point, I would, first, show the nature of censoriousness, or wherein it consists; and then mention some things wherein it appears to be contrary to a Christian spirit. I would show,

I. *The nature of censoriousness, or wherein a censorious spirit, or a disposition uncharitably to judge others, consists.* — Itconsists in a disposition to think evil of others, or to judge evil of them, with respect to three things: their state, their qualities, their actions. And,

1. A censorious spirit appears *in a forwardness to judge evil of the state of others.* It often shows itself in adisposition to think the worst of those about us, whether they are men of the world or professing Christians. In respect to the latter class, it often leads persons to pass censure on those who are professors of religion, and to condemn them as being hypocrites. Here, however, extremes are to be avoided. Some persons are very apt to be positive, from little things that they observe in others, in determining that they are godly men; and others are forward, from just as little things, to be positive in condemning others as not having the least degree of grace in their hearts, and as being strangers to vital and experimental religion. But all positiveness in an affair of this nature seems to be without warrant from the Word of God. God seems there to have reserved the positive determination of men's state to himself, as a thing to be kept

in his own hands, as the great and only searcher of the hearts of the children of men.

Persons are guilty of censoriousness in condemning the state of others, when they will do it from things that are no evidence of their being in a bad estate, or when they will condemn others as hypocrites because of God's providential dealings with them, as Job's three friends condemned him as a hypocrite on account of his uncommon and severe afflictions. And the same is true when they condemn them for the failings they may see in them, and which are no greater than are often incident to God's children, and it may be no greater, or not so great as their own, though, notwithstanding just such things, they think well of themselves as Christians. And so persons are censorious when they condemn others as being unconverted and carnal men because they differ from them in opinion on some points that are not fundamental, or when they judge ill of their state from what they observe in them, for want of making due allowances for their natural temperament, or for their manner or want of education, or other peculiar disadvantages under which they labor, — or when they are ready to reject all as irreligious and unconverted men, because their experiences do not in everything quadrate with their own; setting up themselves, and their own experience, as a standard and rule to all others; not being sensible of that vast variety and liberty which the Spirit of God permits and uses in his saving work on the hearts of men, and how mysterious and inscrutable his ways often are, and especially in this great work of making men new creatures in Christ Jesus. In all these ways, men often act, not only censoriously, but as unreasonably (in not allowing any to be Christians who have not their own experiences) as if they would not allow any to be men who had not just their own stature, and the same strength, or temperament of body, and the very same features of countenance with themselves. In the next place,

2. A censorious spirit appears in *a forwardness to judge evil of the qualities of others*. It appears in a disposition to overlook their good qualities, or to think them destitute of such qualities when they are not, or to make very little of them; or to magnify their ill qualities, and make more of them than is just; or to charge them with those ill qualities that they have not. Some are very apt to charge others with ignorance and

folly, and other contemptible qualities, when they in no sense deserve to be esteemed thus by them. Some seem very apt to entertain a very low and despicable opinion of others, and so to represent them to their associates and friends, when a charitable disposition would discern many good things in them, to balance or more than balance the evil, and would frankly own them to be persons not to be despised. And some are ready to charge others with those morally evil qualities that they are free from, or to charge them with such qualities in a much higher degree than they at all deserve. Thus some have such a prejudice against some of their neighbors, that they regard them as a great deal more proud sort of persons, more selfish, or spiteful, or malicious, than they really are. Through some deep prejudice they have imbibed against them, they are ready to conceive that they have all manner of bad qualities, and no good ones. They seem to them to be an exceeding proud, or covetous, or selfish, or in some way bad, sort of men, when it may be that to others they appear well. Others see their many good qualities, and see, perhaps, many palliations of the qualities that are not good; but the censorious see only that which is evil, and speak only that which is unjust and disparaging as to the qualities of others. And,

3. A censorious spirit appears *in a forwardness to judge evil of the actions of others*. By actions, here, I would be understood to mean all the external voluntary acts of men, whether consisting in words or deeds. And a censorious spirit in judging evil of others' actions discovers itself in two things: — *First,* in judging them to be guilty of evil actions *without any evidence that constrains them to such a judgment*. A suspicious spirit, which leads persons to be jealous of others, and ready to suspect them of being guilty of evil things when they have no evidence of it whatever, is an uncharitable spirit, and contrary to Christianity. Some persons are very free in passing their censures on others with respect to those things that they suppose they do out of their sight. They are ready to believe that they commit this, and that, and the other evil deed, in secret, and away from the eyes of men, or that they have done or said thus and so among their associates, and in the circle of their friends, and that, from some design or motive, they keep these things hid from others that are not in the same interest with themselves. These are the persons chargeable with the "evil surmisings" spoken of and condemned by the

apostle (1 Tim. 6:4, and which are connected with "envy, strife, and railings." Very often, again, persons show an uncharitable and censorious spirit with respect to the actions of others, by being forward to take up and circulate evil reports about them. Merely hearing a flying and evil rumor about an individual, in such a thoughtless and lying world as this is, is far from being sufficient evidence against anyone, to make us believe he has been guilty of that which is reported; for the devil, who is called "the god of this world," is said to be "a liar, and the father of it," and too many, alas! of his children are like him in their speaking of falsehoods. And yet it is a very common thing for persons to pass a judgment on others, on no better ground or foundation than that they have heard that somebody has said this, or that, or the other thing, though they have no evidence that what is said is true. When they hear that another has done or said so and so, they seem at once to conclude that it is so, without making any further inquiry, though nothing is more uncertain, or more likely to prove false, than the mutterings or whispers of common fame. And some are always so ready to catch up an ill report, that it seems to be pleasing to them to hear evil of others. Their spirit seems greedy of it; and it is, as it were, food to the hunger of their depraved hearts, and they feed on it, as carrion birds do on the worst of flesh. They easily and greedily take it in as true, without examination, thus showing how contrary they are in character and conduct to him of whom the Psalmist speaks (Psa. 15:1-3) as dwelling in God's tabernacle, and abiding in his holy hill, and of whom he declares, that "he taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;" and showing, also, that they are rather like "the wicked doer," that "giveth heed to false lips," and as the "liar," who "giveth ear to a naughty tongue" Pro. 17:4). A censorious spirit in judging evil of the actions of others, also discovers itself

Second, in a disposition *to put the worst constructions on their actions.* The censorious are not only apt to judge others guilty of evil actions without sufficient evidence, but they are also prone to put a bad construction on their actions, when they will just as well, and perhaps better, admit of a good construction. Very often, the moving design and end in the action is secret, confined to the recesses of the actor's own bosom; and yet persons are commonly very forward to pass their censure upon the act, without reference to these: and this is a kind of

censoriousness and uncharitable judging, as common, or more common, than any other. Thus, it is very common with men, when they are prejudiced against others, to put bad constructions on their actions or words that are seemingly good, as though they were performed in hypocrisy; and this is especially true in reference to public offices and affairs. If anything be said or done by persons wherein there is a show of concern for the public good, or the good of a neighbor, or the honor of God, or the interest of religion, some will always be ready to say that all this is in hypocrisy, and that the design really is, only to promote their own interest, and to advance themselves; and that they are only flattering and deluding others, having all the time some evil design in their hearts.

But here it may be inquired, "Wherein lies the evil of judging ill of others, since it is not true that all judging ill of others is unlawful? And where are the lines to be drawn?" To this I reply,

First, there are some persons *that are appointed on purpose to be judges,* in civil societies, and in churches, who are impartially to judge of others that properly fall under their cognizance, whether good or bad, and to pass sentence according to what they are; to approve the good, and condemn the bad, according to the evidence, and the nature of the act done, and its agreement or disagreement with the law which is the judges' rule.

Second, particular persons, in their private judgments of others; *are not obliged to divest themselves of reason,* that they may thus judge well of all. This would be plainly against reason; for Christian charity is not a thing founded on the ruins of reason, but there is the most sweet harmony between reason and charity. And therefore we are not forbidden to judge all persons when there is plain and clear evidence that they are justly chargeable with evil. We are not to blame, when we judge those to be wicked men, and poor Christless wretches, who give flagrant proof that they are so by a course of wicked action. "Some men's sins," says the apostle, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." That is, some men's sins are such plain testimony against them, that they are sufficient to condemn them as wicked men in full sight of the world, even before the coming of that final day of judgment that shall disclose the secrets of the heart to all. And so some

men's actions give such clear evidence of the evil of their intentions, that it is no judging the secrets of the heart, to judge that their designs and ends are wicked. And therefore it is plain, that all judging as to others' state, or qualifications, or actions, is not an uncharitable censoriousness. But the evil of that judging wherein censoriousness consists, lies in two things: —

It lies, *first,* in judging evil of others when evidence does not oblige to it, or in thinking ill of them when the case very well allows of thinking well of them; when those things that seem to be in their favor are overlooked, and only those that are against them are regarded, and when the latter are magnified, and too great stress laid on them. And the same is the case when persons are hasty and rash in judging and condemning others, though both prudence and charity oblige them to suspend their judgment till they know more of the matter, and all the circumstances are plain before them. Persons may often show a great deal of uncharitableness and rashness, in freely censuring others before they have heard what they have to say in their defense. And hence it is said, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Pro. 18:13).

And the evil of that judging which is censorious, lies, in the *second* place, in a well-pleasedness in judging ill of others. Persons may judge ill of others, from clear and plain evidence that compels them to it, and yet it may be to their grief that they are obliged to judge as they do; just as when a tender parent hears of some great crime of a child with such evidence that he cannot but think it true. But very often judgment is passed against others, in such a manner as shows that the individual is well pleased in passing it. He is so forward in judging evil, and judges on such slight evidence, and carries his judgment to such extremes, as shows that his inclination is in it, and that he loves to think the worst of others. Such a well-pleasedness in judging ill of others is also manifested in our being forward to declare our judgment, and to speak as well as think evil of others. It may be in speaking of them with ridicule, or an air of contempt, or in bitterness or maliciousness of spirit, or with manifest pleasure in their deficiencies or errors. When to judge ill of others is against the inclination of persons, they will be very cautious in doing it, and will go no further in it than evidence obliges them, and will think the

best that the nature of the case will admit, and will put the best possible construction on the words and actions of others. And when they are obliged, against their inclination, to think evil of another, it will be no pleasure to declare it, but they will be backward to speak of it to any, and will do so only when a sense of duty leads them to it.

Raving thus shown the nature of censoriousness, I pass, as proposed,

II. *To show how a censorious spirit is contrary to the spirit of charity, or Christian love.* And,

1. *It is contrary to love to our neighbor.* — And this appears by three things.

First, wesee that persons are *very backward to judge evil of themselves.* They are very ready to think well of their own qualifications; and so they are forward to think the best of their own state. If there be anything in them that resembles grace, they are exceeding apt to think that their state is good; and so they are ready to think well of their own words and deeds, and very backward to think evil of themselves in any of these respects. And the reason is, that they have a great love to themselves. And, therefore, if they loved their neighbor as themselves, love would have the same tendency with respect to him.

Second, we see that persons *are very backward to judge evil of those they love.* Thus we see it is in men toward those that are their personal friends, and thus it is in parents toward their children. They are very ready to think well of them, and to think the best of their qualifications, whether natural or moral. They are much more backward than others to take up evil reports of them, and slow to believe what is said against them. They are forward to put the most favorable constructions on their actions. And the reason is, because they love them.

Third, we see, also, that it is universally the case, *that where hatred and ill-will toward others most prevail, there a censorious spirit does most prevail also.* When persons fall out, and there is a difficulty between them, and anger and prejudice arise, and ill-will is contracted, there is always a forwardness to judge the worst of each other; an aptness to think

meanly of each other's qualifications, and to imagine they discover in each other a great many evil qualities, and some that are very evil indeed. And each is apt to entertain jealousies of what the other may do when absent and out of sight; and is forward to listen to evil reports respecting him, and to believe every word of them, and apt to put the worst construction on all that he may say or do. And very commonly there is a forwardness to think ill of the condition he is in, and to censure him as a graceless person. And as it is in cases like this, of difficulty between particular persons, so it is apt to be the like in cases of difference between two parties. And these things show plainly that it is want of Christian love to our neighbor, and the indulgence of a contrary spirit, from which censoriousness arises. I will only add,

2. *That a censorious spirit manifests a proud spirit.* — And this, the context declares, is contrary to the spirit of charity, or Christian love. A forwardness to judge and censure others shows a proud disposition, as though the censorious person thought himself free from such faults and blemishes, and therefore felt justified in being busy and bitter in charging others with them, and censuring and condemning them for them. This is implied in the language of the Savior, in the seventh chapter of Matthew, "Judge not, that ye be not judged…And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? *Thou hypocrite*!"And the same is implied in the declaration of the apostle, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. 2:1). If men were humbly sensible of their own failings, they would not be very forward or pleased in judging others, for the censure passed upon others would but rest on themselves. There are the same kinds of corruption in one man's heart as in another's; and if those persons that are most busy in censuring others would but look within, and seriously examine their own hearts and lives, they might generally see the same dispositions and behavior in themselves, at one time or another, which they see and judge in others, or at least something as much deserving of censure. And a disposition to judge and condemn shows a conceited and arrogant disposition. It has the appearance of a

person's setting himself up above others, as though he were fit to be the lord and judge of his fellow-servants, and he supposed they were to stand or fall according to his sentence. This seems implied in the language of the apostle — "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge" (Jam. 4:11). That is, you do not act as a fellow-servant to him that you judge, or as one that is under the same law with him, but as the giver of the law, and the judge whose province it is to pass sentence under it. And therefore it is added, in the next verse, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?" And so in Rom. 14:4, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." God is the only rightful judge, and the thought of his sovereignty and dominion should hold us back from daring to judge or censure our fellow-beings.

In the application of this subject I remark,

1. *It sternly reproves those who commonly take to themselves the liberty of speaking evil of others.* — If to think evil be so much to be condemned, surely they are still more to be condemned who not only allow themselves in thinking, but also in speaking evil of others, and backbiting them with their tongues. The evil-speaking that is against neighbors behind their backs does very much consist in censuring them, or in the expression of uncharitable thoughts and judgments of their persons and behavior. And, therefore, speaking evil of others, and judging others, are sometimes put for the same thing in the Bible, as in the passage just quoted from the apostle James. How often does the Scripture condemn backbiting and evil-speaking! The Psalmist declares of the wicked, "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son" (Psa. 50:19, 20). And, says the apostle, to Titus, "Put them in mind... to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men" (Tit. 3:1, 2); and again, it is written, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings" (1 Pet. 2:1). And it is mentioned, as part of the character of everyone that is a citizen of Zion,

and that shall stand on God's holy hill, that he "backbiteth not with his tongue" (Psa. 15:3). Inquire, therefore, whether you have not been often guilty of this; whether you have not frequently censured others, and expressed your hard thoughts of them, especially of those with whom you may have had some difficulty, or that have been of a different party from yourself. And is it not a practice in which you more or less allow yourself now, from day to day? And if so, consider how contrary it is to the spirit of Christianity, and to the solemn profession which, it may be, you have made as Christians; and be admonished entirely and at once to forsake it. The subject,

2. *Warns all against censoriousness, either by thinking or speaking evil of others, as they would be worthy of the name of Christians.* — And here, in addition to the thoughts already suggested, let two or three things be considered. And,

First, how often, *when the truth comes fully out, do things appear far better concerning others than at first we were ready to* judge. — There are many instances in the Scriptures to this point. When the children of Reuben, and of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built an altar by Jordan, the rest of Israel heard of it, and presently concluded that they had turned away from the Lord, and rashly resolved to go to war against them. But when the truth came to light, it appeared, on the contrary, that they had erected their altar for a good end, even for the worship of God, as may be seen in the twenty-second chapter of Joshua. Eli thought Hannah was drunk, when she came up to the temple; but when the truth came to light, he was satisfied that she was full of grief, and was praying and pouring out her soul before God (1 Sam. 1:12-16). David concluded, from what Ziba told him, that Mephibosheth had manifested a rebellious and treasonable spirit against his crown, and so acted on his censorious judgment, greatly to the injury of the latter; but when the truth came to appear, he saw it was quite otherwise. Elijah judged ill of the state of Israel, that none were true worshippers of God but himself; but when God told him the truth, it appeared that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And how commonly are things very much the same now-a-days! How often, on thorough examination, have we found things better of others than we have heard, and than at first we

were ready to judge! There are always two sides to every story, and it is generally wise, and safe, and charitable to take the best; and yet there is probably no one way in which persons are so liable to be wrong, as in presuming the worst is true, and in forming and expressing their judgment of others, and of their actions, without waiting till all the truth is known.

Second, how *little occasion is there for us to pass our sentence on others* with respect to their state, qualification or actions that do not concern us. Our great concern is with ourselves. It is of infinite consequence to us that we have a good estate before God; that we are possessed of good qualities and principles; and that we behave ourselves well, and act with right aims, and for right ends. But it is a minor matter to us how it is with others. And there is little need of our censure being passed, even if it were deserved, which we cannot be sure of; for the business is in the hands of God, who is infinitely more fit to see to it than we can be. And there is a day appointed for his decision. So that, if we assume to judge others, we shall not only take upon ourselves a work that does not belong to us, but we shall be doing it before the time. "Therefore," says the apostle, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

Third, God has threatened, that *if we are found censoriously judging and condemning others, we shall* be *condemned ourselves*. — "Judge not," he says, "that ye benot judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." And again, the apostle asks, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:3). These are awful threatenings from the lips of that great Being who is to be our judge at the final day, by whom it infinitely concerns us to be acquitted, and from whom a sentence of condemnation will be unspeakably dreadful to us, if at last we sink forever under it. Therefore, as we would not ourselves receive condemnation from him, let us not mete out such measure to others.

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Love, or a Christian Spirit, Willing to Undergo all Sufferings in the Way of Duty

"Charity . . . bears all things." -- ***1 Corinthians 13:7***

HAVING in the previous verses declared those fruits of charity that consist in *doing*, the apostle now proceeds to speak of those that have reference to *suffering*; and here he declares that charity, or the spirit of Christian love, tends to dispose men, and make them willing, to undergo all sufferings for Christ's sake, and in the way of duty. This I suppose to be the meaning of the expression, "*beareth all things*." Some, I know, would understand these words as referring only to the meek bearing of injuries from our fellowmen. But it seems to me that they are rather to be understood in the sense here given, of suffering in the cause of Christ and religion; and that for the following reasons:

First, as to bearing injuries from men, *that* the apostle had mentioned before, in saying that "charity suffereth long," and again, in declaring that it "is not easily provoked," or that it tends to the resisting of the passion of anger; and, therefore, there is no need to suppose that he would use such tautology as again to mention the same thing a third time.

Second, the apostle seems evidently to have done with the fruits of charity of a more active nature, and to have summed them all up in the expression of the previous verse, "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." He had been rehearsing over the various points of good conduct toward our neighbor which charity tends to, and having summed up these in the above expression, he now seems to proceed to traits of another nature, and not to be repeating the same things over in other words.

Third, it is a frequent thing for the apostle Paul to mention suffering in the cause of Christ as a fruit of Christian love; and therefore it is not probable that he would omit so great a fruit of love in this place, where he is professedly reckoning up all the important fruits of love or charity. It is common for the apostle elsewhere to mention suffering in the cause of religion as a fruit of love or charity. So he does in 2 Cor. 5:14, where, after speaking of what he had undergone in the cause of Christ, on account of which others were ready to say he was beside himself, he gives as the reason of it, that the love of Christ constrained him. And so, again, in Rom. 5:3-5, he gives it as a reason why he was willing to glory in tribulations, that the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. And still again, he declares, that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, should be able to separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35). Now, since suffering in the cause of Christ is so great a fruit of charity, and so often spoken of elsewhere by the apostle, it is not likely that he would omit it here, where he is professedly speaking of the various fruits of charity.

Fourth, the following words, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," all show that the apostle has done with those fruits of charity that have chief reference to our fellowmen, as may be manifest hereafter, when these expressions may be more fully considered. The doctrine, then, that I would draw from the text, is,

THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WILL MAKE US WILLING, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, TO UNDERGO ALL SUFFERINGS TO WHICH WE MAY BE EXPOSED IN THE WAY ON DUTY.

And in clearing this doctrine, I would, first, briefly explain it, and then give some reason or proof of its truth.

I. *I would explain the* doctrine. — And, in so doing, I remark,

1. *That it implies that those that have the true spirit of charity or Christian love, are willing not only to do, but also to suffer, for Christ.* — Hypocrites may, and oftentimes do, make a great show of religion in profession, and in words that cost nothing, and in actions that involve no

great difficulty or suffering. But they have not *a suffering spirit,* or a spirit that inclines them willingly to suffer for Christ's sake. When they undertook in religion, it was not with any view to suffering, or with any design or expectation of being injured by it in their temporal interests. They closed with Christ, so far as they did, only to serve a turn for themselves. All that they do in religious things is from a selfish spirit, and commonly very much for their interest, as it was with the Pharisees of old; and therefore they are far from the spirit that is willing to meet suffering either in their persons or their interests. But those that are truly Christians have a spirit to suffer for Christ; and they are willing to follow him on that condition which he himself has given: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). And not only are they willing to suffer for Christ, but,

2. *It is also implied in our doctrine, that they have the spirit to undergo all the sufferings to which their duty to Christ may expose them.* — Andhere,

First, they are willing to undergo allsufferings, *of all kinds,* that are in the way of duty. They have the spirit of willingness to suffer in their good name; for Christ's sake to suffer reproach and contempt; and to prefer the honor of Christ before their own. With the apostle they can say, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12:10). They have a spirit to suffer the hatred and ill-will of men, as was foretold by Christ when he said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Mat. 10:22). They have a spirit to suffer losses in their outward possessions; as says the apostle, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered. the loss of all things" (Phil 3:8). They have the Spirit to suffer in their ease and comfort, and to endure hardships and fatigues: like Paul, to approve themselves faithful, "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings" (2 Cor. 6:4, 5). They have the spirit to suffer pain of body, like those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance; and those who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and of bonds and imprisonment (Heb. 11:35, 36). They have a spirit to

suffer even death itself. “He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat. 10:39). These, and all other conceivable sufferings *in kind* they are willing to undergo for Christ’s sake, and in the way of duty. And so,

Second, they are willing to undergo all sufferings, *of all degrees,* that are in the way of duty. They are like pure gold, that will bear the trial of the hottest furnace. They have the heart to forsake all, and follow Christ, and comparatively to “hate” even “father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and their own life also,” for Christ’s sake (Luke 14:26). They have the spirit to suffer the greatest degrees of reproach and contempt; and to have trial not only of mockings, but of *cruel* mockings; and to bear not only loss, but the loss of *all* things. They have the spirit to suffer death; and not only so, but the most cruel and tormenting forms of death, such as “to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, and to be slain with the sword, and to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Heb. 11:37). The fiercest and most cruel sufferings *in degree,* they are willing to undergo for Christ. I proceed,

II. *To give some reason or proof of the doctrine.* — And that it is so, that they who have a truly gracious spirit are willing to undergo all sufferings that they may be exposed to in the way of their duty, will appear from the following considerations: —

1. *If we have not such a spirit, it is an evidence that we have never given ourselves unreseveredly to Christ.* — It is necessary to our being Christians, or followers of Christ, that we should give ourselves to him unreservedly, to be his wholly, and his only, and his forever. And therefore the believer’s closing with Christ is often, in the Scriptures, compared to the act of a bride in giving herself in marriage to her husband; as when God says to his people, “I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies” (Hos. 2:19). But a woman, in marriage, gives herself to her husband to be his, and his only. True believers are not their own, for they are bought with a price, and they consent to the full right that Christ has in them, and recognize it by their own act, giving themselves to him as a voluntary and living sacrifice,

wholly devoted to him. But they that have not a spirit to suffer all things for Christ, show that they do not give themselves wholly to him, because they make a reserve of such cases of suffering as they are not willing to bear for his sake. In those cases they desire to be excused from being for Christ and his glory, and choose rather that his cause should be set aside for their own ease or interest, and indeed should entirely give way for it. But making such reserves of cases of suffering is certainly inconsistent with truly devoting themselves to God. It is rather being like Ananias and Sapphira, who gave but part, and kept back part of that which they professed to give to the Lord. To give ourselves wholly to Christ implies the sacrificing of our own temporal interest wholly to him. But he that wholly sacrifices his temporal interest to Christ, is ready to suffer all things in his worldly interests for him. If God be truly loved, he is loved as God; and to love him as God, is to love him as the supreme good. But he that loves God as the supreme good, is ready to make all other good give place to that; or, which is the same thing, he is willing to suffer all for the sake of this good.

2. *They that are truly Christians, so fear God, that his displeasure is far more terrible than all earthly afflictions and sufferings.* — When Christ is telling his disciples what sufferings they should be exposed to for his sake, he says to them, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him" (Luke 12:4, 5). And so, again, it is said by the prophet, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa. 8:13). Now they that are truly Christians see and know him who is so great and dreadful a God, and they know that his displeasure and wrath are far more dreadful than all the temporal sufferings that can be in the way of their duty, and more dreadful than the wrath and cruelty of men, or the worst torments that they can inflict. And therefore they have a spirit to suffer all that can be inflicted, rather than forsake God, and sin against him who can inflict upon them eternal wrath.

3. *They that are truly Christians, have that faith whereby they see that which is more than sufficient to make up for the greatest sufferings they*

can endure in the cause of Christ. — They see that excellency in God and Christ, whom they have chosen for their portion, which far outweighs all possible sufferings. And they see, too, that glory which God has promised to them that suffer for his sake — that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which their sufferings for Christ's sake work out for them, and in comparison with which, the heaviest sorrows and most enduring trials are but "light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17). Moses' faith is given as a reason why he was willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, and to endure reproach for Christ's sake, because, in the exercise of that faith, he saw something better than the throne and riches of Egypt laid up for him in heaven (Heb. 11:24-26).

4. *If we are not willing to close with religion, notwithstanding all the difficulties attending it, we shall be overwhelmed with shame at last.* — So Christ expressly teaches us. His language is, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:28-33). The sufferings that are in the way of our duty, are among the difficulties that attend religion. They are part of the cost of being religious. He, therefore, that is not willing to meet this cost, never complies with the terms of religion. He is like the man that wishes his house was built, but is not willing to meet the cost of building it; and so, in effect, refuses to build it. He that does not receive the gospel with all its difficulties, does not receive it as it is proposed to him. He that does not receive Christ with his cross as well as his crown, does not truly receive him at all. It is true that Christ invites us to come to him to find rest, and to buy wine and milk: but then he also invites us to come and take up the cross, and that daily, that we may follow him; and if we come only to accept the former, we do not in truth accept the offer of the gospel, for both go together, the rest and the yoke,

the cross and the crown: and it will signify nothing, that, in accepting only the one, we accept what God never offered. to us. They that receive only the easy part of Christianity, and not the difficult, at best are but almost Christians; while they that are wholly Christians receive the whole of Christianity, and thus shall be accepted and honored, and not cast out with shame, at the last day.

5. *Without this spirit which the text implies, we cannot be said to forsake all for Christ.* — Ifthere be any one kind or degree of temporal suffering that we have not a spirit to undergo for Christ, then there is something that we do not forsake for him. For example, if we are not willing to suffer reproach for Christ, then we are not willing to forsake honor for him. And so if we are not willing to suffer poverty, pain, and death for his sake, then we are not willing to forsake wealth, ease, and life for him. But Christ is abundant in teaching us, that we must be willing to forsake all that we have for him, if duty requires it, or we cannot be his disciples (Luke 14:26, etc.)

6. *Without this spirit we cannot be said to deny ourselves in the sense in which the Scriptures require us to do it.* — The Scriptures teach us, that it is absolutely necessary to deny ourselves in order to our being the disciples of Christ. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it" (Mat. 16:24, 25). These expressions, as here used, signify as much as a man's renouncing himself. And the man who acts according to them in his practice, lives as though he disowned himself for Christ. He puts himself to difficulty or suffering, as though he did not own himself. As the children of Levi were said not to know or acknowledge their own relatives and friends, when they put them to the sword for their sin in making the golden calf, so Christians are said not to acknowledge, but to deny themselves, when they crucify the flesh, and undergo great sufferings for Christ, as though they had no mercy on themselves. Those that will do contrary to the will of Christ and his glory, for the sake of avoiding suffering, deny Christ instead of denying themselves. Those that dare not confess Christ before persecutors, do in fact deny him before men, and are of the number of whom Christ says,

that he will deny them before his Father in heaven (Mat. 10:33); and as to whom the apostle says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).

7. *It is the character of all the true followers of Christ, that they follow him in all things.* — “These are they,” says the beloved disciple, alluding to those about the throne of God — “these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev. 14:4). Those that are willing to follow Christ only in prosperity, and not in adversity, or only in some sufferings, and not in all, cannot be said to follow him whithersoever he goeth. We read of one who said to Christ, while he was on earth, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;” and that Christ said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Mat. 8:19, 20). And by this he signified to him, that if he would follow him wherever he went, he must follow him through great difficulties and sufferings. They that are true followers of Christ, are of the same spirit toward Christ that Ittai the Gittite manifested toward David, in not only clinging to him in prosperity, but also in his adversity, even when David would have excused him from going with him. He said, “As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be” (2 Sam. 15:21). Of such a spirit are true Christians toward Christ, the spiritual David.

8. *It is the character of true Christians, that they overcome the world.* — “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). But to overcome the world, implies that we overcome alike its flatteries and frowns, its sufferings and difficulties. These are the weapons of the world, by which it seeks to conquer us; and if there be any of these that we have not a spirit to encounter for Christ’s sake, then by such weapons the world will have us in subjection, and gain the victory over us. But Christ gives his servants the victory over the world in *all* its forms. They are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them. Once more,

9. *The sufferings in the way of duty are often, in the Bible, called temptations or trials, because by them God tries the sincerity of our character as Christians.* — By placing such sufferings in our way, God

tries whether we have a spirit to undergo suffering, and so tries our sincerity by suffering, as gold is tried by the fire, to know whether it is pure gold or not. And as by the fire the pure gold may be known from all baser metals, and from all imitations of it; so, by observing whether we are willing to undergo trials and sufferings for Christ's sake, God sees whether we are indeed his people, or whether we are ready to forsake him and his service when any difficulty or danger is in the way. It seems to be with this view that the apostle Peter says to those to whom he wrote, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6, 7). And again, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12, 13). And so God by his prophet declares, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zec. 13:9).

In the application of this subject, let it

1. *Lead those who think themselves Christians to examine themselves, whether or no they have the spirit to undergo all sufferings for Christ.* — It becomes all persons very strictly to examine themselves, whether they are of a suffering spirit or not, seeing such great importance is attached to such a spirit in the Scriptures. Though you never have had the trial of having such great and extreme sufferings laid in the way of your duty, as many others have had, yet you have had enough, in the course of God's providence, to show what your spirit is, and whether you are of a disposition to suffer, and to renounce your own comfort, and ease, and interest, rather than forsake Christ. It is God's manner in his providence, commonly, to exercise all professors of religion, and especially those that may live in times of trial, with trials of this sort, by laying such difficulties in their way as shall make manifest what their spirit is, and whether it be

a spirit of self-renunciation or not. It is often the case with Christians who are exposed to persecutions, that if they will cleave to Christ, and be faithful to him, they must suffer in their good name, and in losing the goodwill of others, or in their outward ease and convenience, being exposed to many troubles; or in their estates, being brought into difficulty as to their business; or must do many things that they are exceeding averse to, and that are even dreadful to them. Have you, when you have had such trials, found in yourself a spirit to bear all things that come upon you, rather than in anything be unfaithful to your great Lord and Redeemer? And you have the more need to examine yourselves with respect to this point, for you know not but that before you die you may have such trial of persecutions as other Christians have had. Every true Christian has the spirit of a martyr. And if you have not the suffering spirit in the lesser trials or sufferings that God may have sent upon you, how will it be if he should expose you to bitter persecutions, such as the saints of old sometimes were called to endure? If you cannot bear trials in little things, how can you possess that charity which beareth *all* things? As the prophet says in another case, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer. 12:5). Our subject,

2. *Exhorts all professors of religion to cherish a ready spirit, for Christ's sake, to undergo all sufferings that may be in the way of duty.* And here consider,

First, how happy those persons are represented in the Scriptures to be, who have a spirit to suffer, and do actually suffer, for Christ. "Blessed," says Christ, "are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" (Mat. 5:10-12). And again, "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and

leap for joy; for your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:21-23). And again, "Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). And again, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised. to them that love him" (Jam. 1:12). And again, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye" (1 Pet. 3:14). And the New Testament is full of similar expressions, all of which may encourage us in the way of suffering for Christ. And consider, also,

Second, what glorious rewards God has promised hereafter to bestow on those that do willingly suffer for Christ. It is said that they shall receive a "crown of life;" and Christ promises, that those that forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Mat. 19:29). And again we are told, of those who suffer for Christ's sake, that they shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 The. 1:5); and again, that it is a faithful saying, that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him (2 Tim. 2:11, 12); and still again, that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together with him (Rom. 8:17). And we have also the most glorious promises made to those that overcome, and gain the victory over the world — "To him that overcometh," says Christ, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," and "he shall not be hurt of the second death;" and "to him will I give to eat of the hidden manna;" and "to him will I give power over the nations;" and "I will give him the morning star;" and "he shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels;" and "him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him my new name;" and "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 27, 28; 3:5, 12, 21). Surely promises so rich and abundant as these, should make us willing to undergo all sufferings for the sake of Christ, who will so gloriously reward us for them all. Once more, consider,

Third, how the Scriptures abound with blessed examples of those that have suffered for Christ's sake. The Psalmist, speaking of the reproach and blasphemy he had suffered from the enemy and avenger, says, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant" (Psa. 44:17, 18); and again, "The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law… Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies… Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of thy word" (Psa. 119:51, 157, 161). And the prophet Jeremiah spake boldly for God, though he was threatened with death for so doing (Jer. 26:11, 15). And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the golden image that the king of Babylon had set up, though they knew they would be cast into the fiery furnace (Dan. 3); and Daniel himself would still faithfully pray to his God, though he expected for it to be shut up in the den of lions (Dan. 6). But the time would fail me to tell of apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and saints, and of Christ himself, who were faithful alike through good report and evil report, and in sufferings and trials, and who counted not their lives dear, so that they might be faithful to the end. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1, 2). "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

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Love, or True Grace, Not to be Overthrown by Opposition

"Charity . . . endures all things." -- **1 Corinthians 13:7**

In these words, and in saying previously that "charity suffereth long," and again, that it "beareth all things," the apostle is commonly understood as making statements of substantially the same signification as though the three expressions were synonymous, and all of them only said the same things in different words.

But this idea is doubtless from a misunderstanding of his meaning. For if we closely consider these various expressions, and the manner in which they are used, we shall find that every one of them signifies or points to a different fruit of charity. Two of these expressions have already been considered, viz. that "charity suffereth long," and that it "beareth all things;" and the former was shown to have reference to the bearing of injuries received from men, and the latter to the spirit that would lead us to undergo all sufferings to which we might be called for Christ's sake, and rather than to forsake him or our duty. And this expression of the text, that charity "endureth all things," signifies something different from either of the other statements. It expresses *the lasting and abiding nature of the principle of charity, or true grace in the soul* and declares that it will not fail, but will continue and endure, notwithstanding all the opposition it may meet with, or that may be brought against it. The two expressions, "beareth all things," and "endureth all things," as in our English translation, and as commonly used, are indeed very much of the same import. But the expression of the original, if literally translated, would be, "charity remains under all things;" that is, it still remains, or still remains constant and persevering under all opposition that may come against it. Whatever assaults may be made upon it, yet it still remains and endures, and does not cease, but bears up, and bears onward with constancy and perseverance and patience, notwithstanding them all.

According to the explanation that has been given of the four expressions of this verse, "beareth," "believeth," "hopeth," and "endureth all things," the meaning of the apostle appears easy, natural, and agreeable to the context. He is endeavoring to set forth the universal benefit of charity, or a spirit of Christian love. And to show how it is the sum of all good in the

heart, he first shows how it disposes to all good behavior towards men, and sums up that matter by saying that charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." And then he proceeds, and declares that charity not only disposes to doing and suffering in the cause of Christ, but that it includes a suffering spirit, so that it "beareth all things;" and that it does this by promoting the two graces of faith and hope, which are mainly occupied in sufferings in the cause of Christ; for such sufferings are the trials of our faith; and what upholds the Christian under them, is the hope of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to be given to the faithful in the end; and charity cherishes this faith and hope, and, as the fruit of this faith and hope, it endures all things, and perseveres, and holds out, and cannot be conquered by all the opposition made against it; for faith overcomes the world, and hope in God enables the Christian always to triumph in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine, then, that I would derive from the text, is,

THAT CHARITY, OR TRUE CHRISTIAN GRACE, CANNOT BE OVERTHROWN BY ANYTHING THAT OPPOSES IT.

In speaking to this doctrine, I would, *first*,notice the fact that many things do oppose grace in the heart of the Christian; *second*, advert to the great truth, that it cannot be overthrown; and, *third,* state some reasons why it cannot be shaken, but remains firm under all opposition. And,

I. *There are many things that do greatly oppose the grace which is in the heart of the Christian.* — Thisholy principle has innumerable enemies watching and warring against it. The child of God is encompassed with enemies on every side. He is a pilgrim and stranger passing through an enemy's country, and exposed to attack at any and every moment. There are thousands of devils, artful, intelligent, active, mighty, and implacable, that are bitter enemies to the grace that is in the heart of the Christian, and do all that lies in their power against it. And the world is an enemy to this grace, because it abounds with persons and things that make opposition to it, and with various forms of allurement and temptation, to win or drive us from the path of duty. And the Christian has not only

many enemies without, but multitudes within his own breast, that he carries about with him, and from which he cannot get free. Evil thoughts and sinful inclinations cling to him; and many corruptions that still hold their footing in his heart are the worst enemies that grace has, and have the greatest advantage of any in their warfare against it. And these enemies are not only many, but exceeding strong and powerful, and very bitter in their animosity — implacable, irreconcilable, mortal enemies, seeking nothing short of the utter ruin and overthrow of grace. And they are unwearied in their opposition, so that the Christian, while he remains in this world, is represented as being in a state of warfare, and his business is that of the soldier, insomuch that he is often spoken of as a soldier of the cross, and as one whose great duty it is to fight manfully the good fight of faith.

Many are the powerful and violent assaults that the enemies of grace make upon it. They are not only constantly besieging it, but often they assault it as a city that they would take by storm. They are always lurking and watching for opportunity against it, and sometimes they rise up, in dreadful wrath, and endeavor to carry it by urgent assault. Sometimes one enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes all together, with one consent, buffeting it on every side, and coming in like a flood, are ready to overwhelm it, and to swallow it up at once. Sometimes grace, in the midst of the most violent opposition of its enemies fighting against it with their united subtlety and strength, is like a spark of fire encompassed with swelling billows and raging waves, that appear as if they would swallow it up and extinguish it in a moment. Or it is like a flake of snow falling into the burning volcano; or rather hike a rich jewel of gold in the midst of a fiery furnace, the raging heat of which is enough to consume anything except the pure gold, which is of such a nature that it cannot be consumed by tile fire.

It is with grace in the heart of a Christian, very much as it is with the church of God in the world. It is God's post; and it is but small, and great opposition is made against it by innumerable enemies. The powers of earth and hell are engaged against it, if possible to destroy it; and oftentimes they rise with such violence, and come with such great strength against it, that if we were to judge only by what appears, we

should think it would be taken and destroyed immediately. It is with it as it was with the children of Israel in Egypt, against whom Pharaoh and the Egyptians united all their craft and power, and set themselves to endeavor to extirpate them as a people. It is with it as it was with David in the wilderness, when he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, and driven about by those that sought his life from one desert or cave to another, and several times was chased out into a strange land. And it is with it as it has been with the Christian church under the heathen and antichristian persecutions, when all the world, as it were, united their strength and wit to exterminate it from the earth, destroying thousands and millions with the utmost cruelty, and by the most bloody persecutions, without respect to sex or age. But,

II. *All the opposition that is or can be made against true grace in the heart, cannot overthrow it.* — The enemies of grace may, in many respects, gain great advantages against it. They may exceedingly oppress and reduce it, and bring it into such circumstances that it may seem to be brought to the very brink of utter ruin. But yet it will live. The ruin that seemed impending shall be averted. Though the roaring lion sometimes comes with open mouth, and no visible refuge appears, yet the lamb shall escape and be safe. Yea, though it be in the very paw of the lion or the bear, yet it shall be rescued, and not devoured. And though it even seems actually swallowed down, as Jonah was by the whale, yet it shall be brought up again, and live. It is with grace in the heart, in this respect, as it was with the ark upon the waters — however terrible the storm may be, yea, though it be such a deluge as overwhelms all things else, yet it shall not overwhelm that. Though the floods rise ever so high, yet it shall be kept above the waters; and though the mighty waves may rise above the tops of the highest mountains, yet they shall not be able to get above this ark, but it shall still float in safety. Or it is with this grace as it was with the ship in which Christ was when there arose a great storm, and the waves ran high, insomuch that it seemed as if the ship would instantly sink; and yet it did not sink, though it was actually covered with water, for Christ was in it.

And so, again, grace in the heart is like the children of Israel in Egypt, and

at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Though Pharaoh strove ever so much to destroy them, they yet grew and prospered. And when, at last, he pursued them with all his army, and with chariots and horsemen, and they were pent up by the Red Sea, and saw no way of escape, but seemed to themselves to be on the very brink of ruin, yet they did escape, and were not delivered a prey to their foes. Yea, they were preserved in passing through the very sea itself, for the waters opened before them, and, when they had safely passed over, rolled back and overwhelmed their foes. And they were preserved for a long time in the desolate wilderness, in the midst of pits and drought and fiery flying serpents. Thus, as the gates of hell can never prevail against the church of Christ, so neither can they prevail against grace in the heart of the Christian. The seed remaineth, and none can root it out. The fire is kept alive even m the midst of the floods of water; and though it often appears dim, or as if it were just going out, so that there is no flame, but only a little smoke, yet the smoking flax shall not be quenched.

And grace shall not only remain, but at last shall have the victory. Though it may pass through a long time of sore conflicts, and may suffer many disadvantages and depressions, yet it shall live; and not only live, but it will finally prosper and prevail and triumph, and all its enemies shall be subdued under its feet. As David in the wilderness, though he was long kept in very low and distressed circumstances, pursued by his potent enemies, and many times apparently on the brink of ruin, where there seemed but a step between him and death, was yet through all preserved, and at last exalted to the throne of Israel, and to wear the royal crown in great prosperity and with glory; so we see it is with grace, that it can never be overthrown; and its depressions do but prepare the way for its exaltation. Where it does truly exist in the heart, all its enemies cannot destroy it, and all the opposition made against it cannot crush it. It endures all things, and stands all shocks, and remains notwithstanding all opposers. And the reason of this may be seen in these two things:

1. *That there is so much more in the nature of true grace that tends to perseverance than in false grace.* — False grace is a superficial thing, consisting in mere outward show, or in superficial affections, and not in any change of nature. But true grace reaches to the very bottom of the

heart. It consists in a new nature, and therefore it is lasting and enduring. Where there is nothing but counterfeit grace, corruption is unmortified; and whatever wounds may seem to be given it, they are but slight wounds, that do not at all reach its life, or diminish the strength of its principle, but leave sin in its full strength in the soul, so that it is no wonder that it ultimately prevails, and bears down all before it. But true grace really mortifies sin in the heart. It strikes at its vitals, and gives it a wound that is mortal, sending its stroke to the very heart. When it first enters the soul, it begins a never-ceasing conflict with sin, and therefore it is no wonder that it keeps possession, and finally prevails over its enemy. Counterfeit grace never dispossesses sin of the dominion of the soul, nor destroys its reigning power there, and therefore it is no wonder that it does not itself remain. But true grace is of such a nature that it is inconsistent with the reigning power of sin, and dispossesses the heart of it as it enters, and takes the throne from it, and therefore is the more likely to keep its seat there, and finally to prevail entirely against it. Counterfeit grace, though it may affect the heart, yet is not founded on any real conviction of the soul. But true grace begins in real and thorough conviction, and, having such a foundation, has so much the greater tendency to perseverance. Counterfeit grace is not diligent in prayer; but true grace is prayerful, and thus lays hold on the divine strength to support it, and indeed becomes divine itself, so that the life of God is, as it were, imparted to it. Counterfeit grace is careless whether it perseveres to the end or not; but the grace naturally causes earnest desires for perseverance, and leads to hungerings and thirstings for it. It also makes men sensible of the dangers they are encompassed with, and has a tendency to excite them to watchfulness, and to care and diligence that they may persevere, and to look to God for help, and trust in him for preservation from the many enemies that oppose it. And,

2. *God will uphold true grace, when he has once implanted it in the heart, against all opposition.* — He will never suffer it to be overthrown by all the force that may be brought against it. Though there be much more in true grace that tends to perseverance than there is in counterfeit grace, yet nothing that is in the nature of grace, considered by itself and apart from God's purpose to uphold it, would be sufficient to make sure its continuance, or effectually to keep it from final overthrow. We are kept

from falling, not by the inherent power of grace itself, but, as the apostle Peter tells us (1 Pet. 1:5), "by the power of God through faith." The principle of holiness in the hearts of our first parents, where it had no corruption to contend with, was overthrown; and much more might we expect the seed of grace in the hearts of fallen men, in the midst of so much corruption, and exposed to such active and constant opposition, would be overthrown, did not God uphold it. He has undertaken to defend it from all its enemies, and to give it the victory at last, and therefore it shall never be overthrown. And here I would briefly show how it is evident that God will uphold true grace, and not suffer it to be overthrown, and then show some reasons why he will not suffer it.

First, I would show *how it is evident that God will uphold true grace in the heart*. And, in one word, it is evident from his promise. God has explicitly and often promised that true grace shall never be overthrown. It is promised in that declaration concerning the good man (Psa. 37:24), that "though he fall, he shall not he utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;" and again in the words, Jer. 32:40,"I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" and again, in those words of Christ (Mat. 18:14), that "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." And in accordance with these various declarations, Christ has promised concerning grace (John 4:14), that it shall be in the soul "as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." And again he says (John 6:39), "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And in other places it is said, that Christ's sheep "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand" (John 10:28); that whom God "did foreknow, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified;" and that nothing "shall separate" Christians "from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:29, 30, 35); and again, that "he which hath begun a good work" in us, "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6); and again, that Christ "shall confirm" his people "unto the end, that" they "may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8); and still again, that "he is to able to keep" them "from

falling, and to present" them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). And many other similar promises might be mentioned, all of which declare that God will uphold grace in the heart in which he has once implanted it, and that he will keep to the end those who put their trust in him. But,

Second, I would briefly show *some reasons why God will uphold the principle of grace, and keep it from being overthrown.* And, in the *first* place, unless the redemption provided by Christ secured our perseverance through all opposition, it would not be a complete redemption. Christ died to redeem us from the evil we were subject to under the law, and to bring us to glory. But if he brought us no further than the state we were in at first, and left us as liable to fall as before, then all his redemption might be made void, and come to nothing. Man, before the fall, being left to the freedom of his own will, fell from his steadfastness, and lost his grace when he was comparatively strong, and not exposed to the enemies that now beset him. What then could he do in his present fallen state, and with such imperfect grace, in the midst of his powerful and manifold enemies, if his perseverance depended on himself alone? He would utterly fall and perish; and the redemption provided by Christ, if it did not secure him from thus falling, would be a very imperfect redemption .

In the *second* place, the covenant of grace was introduced to supply what was wanting in the first covenant, and a sure ground of perseverance was the main thing that was wanting in it. The first covenant had no defect on the part of God who constructed it; in that respect it was most holy and just, and wise and perfect. But the result proved that on our part it was wanting, and needed something more in order to its being effectual for our happiness; and the thing needed was something that should be a sure ground of our perseverance. All the ground we had under the first covenant was the freedom of our own will; and this was found not to be depended on; and therefore God has made another covenant. The first was liable to fail, and therefore another was ordained more enduring than the first, and that could not fail, and which therefore is called "all everlasting covenant." The things that could be shaken are removed, to make way for those that cannot be shaken. The first covenant had a head

and surety that was liable to fail, even the father of our race; and therefore God has provided, as the head and surety of the new covenant, one that cannot fail, even Christ, with whom, as the head and representative of all his people, the new covenant is made, and ordered in all things and sure.

In the *third* place, it is not fit that, in a covenant of mercy and saving grace, the reward of life should be suspended on man's perseverance, as depending on the strength and steadfastness of his own will. It is a covenant of works, and not a covenant of grace, that suspends eternal life on that which is the fruit of a man's own strength, to keep him from falling. If all is of free and sovereign grace, then free grace has undertaken the matter to complete and finish it, and has not left it to men themselves, and to the power of their own wills, as it was under the first covenant. As divine grace has commenced the work, it will finish it; and therefore we shall be kept to the end.

In the *fourth* place, our second surety has already persevered, and done what our first surety failed of doing; and therefore we shall surely persevere. Adam, our first surety, did not persevere, and so all fell with him. But if he had persevered, all would have stood with him, and never would have fallen. But our second surety has already persevered, and therefore all that have him for their surety will persevere with him. When Adam fell, he was condemned, and all his posterity was condemned with him, and fell with him. But if he had stood, he would have been justified, and so would have partaken of the tree of life, and been confirmed in a state of life, and all his posterity would have been confirmed. And, by parity of reason, now that Christ, the second Adam, has stood and persevered, and is justified, and confirmed in life, all who are in Christ and represented by him, are also accepted, and justified, and confirmed in him. The fact that he, as the covenant-head of his people, has fulfilled the terms of that covenant, makes it sure that they shall persevere.

In the *fifth* place, the believer is already actually justified, and thus entitled, through the promise of mercy, to eternal life, and therefore God will not suffer him to fail and come short of it. Justification is the actual acquittal of the sinner. It is a full acquittance from guilt, and freedom from condemnation, and deliverance from hell, and acceptance to a full

title to eternal life. And all this is plainly inconsistent with the idea that deliverance from hell, and the attainment of eternal life, are yet suspended on an uncertain perseverance.

In the *sixth* place, the Scriptures teach us, that the believer's grace and spiritual life are a partaking of the life of Christ in his resurrection, which is an immortal and unfading life. This is plainly taught by the apostle, when he says (Col. 2:13), "You hath he quickened together with him," that is, with Christ; and again (Eph. 2:4-6), "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" and still again (Gal 2:20), "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." These expressions show that the believer's spiritual life cannot fail; for Christ says (Rev. 1:18), "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" and the apostle says (Rom. 6:9), "Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Our spiritual life being his life, as truly as the life of the branch is the life of the tree, cannot but continue.

In the *seventh* place, grace is that which God hath implanted in the heart against the great opposition of enemies, and therefore he will doubtless maintain it there against their continued and combined efforts to root it out. The enemies of God and the soul used their utmost endeavors to prevent grace being implanted in the heart that possesses it. But God manifested his all-conquering and glorious power in introducing it there in spite of them all. And therefore he will not at last suffer himself to be conquered by their expelling that which he by his mighty power has so triumphantly brought in. From all which it is plain, that God will uphold the principle of grace in the heart of the Christian, so that it shall never be overthrown or fail.

In the application of this subject,

1. *We may learn one reason why the devil so exceedingly opposes the conversion of sinners.* — It is because if they are once converted, they are forever converted, and thus forever put beyond his reach, so that he can never overthrow and ruin them. If there was such a thing as falling from

grace, doubtless the devil would even then oppose our having grace; but more especially does he oppose it, since he knows that if once we have it, he can never expect to overthrow it, but that we, by its very possession, are finally lost to him, and forever out of the reach of his destroying power. This may show us something of the reason of that violent opposition that persons who are under awakenings and convictions, and who are seeking conversion, meet with through the many and great temptations they are assailed with by the adversary. He is always active, and greatly bestirs himself for the overthrow of such, and heaps mountains in their way, if possible, to hinder the saving work of the Holy Spirit, and prevent their conversion. He labors to the utmost to quench convictions of sin, and if possible to head persons that are under them to return to the ways of heedlessness and sloth, in transgression. Sometimes he endeavors to flatter, and at other times to discourage them, laboring to entangle and perplex their minds, and to his utmost stirring up exercises of corruption, suggesting blasphemous thoughts, and leading them to quarreling with God. By many subtle temptations he endeavors to make them think that it is in vain to seek salvation. He tempts them from the doctrine of God's decrees; or by their own impotence and helplessness; or by telling them that all they do is sin; or by trying to persuade them that their day of grace is past; or by terrifying them with the idea that they have committed the unpardonable sin. Or it may be he tells them that their pains and trouble are needless, and that there is time enough hereafter; or, if possible, he will deceive them with false hopes, and flatter them that they are in a safe estate, while they are still out of Christ. In these, and innumerable other ways, Satan endeavors to hinder the conversion of men, for he knows the truth of the doctrine we have insisted on, that if ever grace be implanted in the soul, he can never overthrow it, and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Again,

2. *We may see from this subject, that those whose seeming grace fails, and is overthrown, may conclude that they never had any true* grace. — That is not true, grace which is like the morning cloud and the early dew, which passeth away. When persons seem for a while to be awakened and terrified, and have more or less of a sense of their sinfulness and vileness, and then afterwards seem much affected with the mercy of God, and appear to find comfort in him, and yet, after all, when the novelty is over,

their impressions decline and pass away, so that there is no abiding change in the heart and life, then it is a sign that they have no true grace. There is nothing in the case of such that answers to the declaration of the apostle (2 Cor 5:17), that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." If the individual, after seeming conversion, turns back from God and Christ and spiritual things, and the heart again goes after vanity and the world, and the known duties of religion are neglected, and the person again returns to the ways of sin, and goes on gratifying the selfish or sensual appetites, and leading a carnal and careless life, then all the promise of his apparent conversion is deceptive. It is but like the promise of the blossoms on the trees in the time of spring or early summer, so many of which fail off; and never bring forth fruit. The result proves that all these seeming appearances of grace are only appearances, and that those who trust to them are awfully deluded. The grace that does not hold out and persevere, is not real grace. Once more,

3. *The subject affords matter of great joy and comfort to all who have good evidence that they indeed have true grace in their hearts.* — Those with whom it is thus are possessed of an inestimable jewel, which is worthmore than all the jewels and precious stones, and all the crowns and costly treasures, in the universe. And this may be a matter of great comfort to them, that they never shall lose this jewel, but that he that gave it will keep it for them; and that, as he has brought them into a most happy state, so he will uphold them in it; and that his mighty power, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself, is on their side, and pledged for their protection, so that none of their enemies shall be able to destroy them. They may rejoice that they have a strong city, unto which God has appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks. And whatever bitterness their enemies manifest against them, and however subtle and violent they may be in their attacks upon them, they may still stand on high, on their munitions of rocks on which God has set them, and laugh their foes to scorn, and glory in the Most High as their sure refuge and defense. The everlasting arms are underneath them. Jehovah, who rides upon the heavens, is their help. And all their foes he will subdue under his feet; so that they may well rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the rock of their salvation. Finally,

4. *The subject also affords matter of great encouragement to the saints in carrying on the warfare against the enemies of their souls.* — It is the greatest of all disadvantages to a soldier to have to go forth to battle without the hope of being able to conquer, but with the prevailing expectation of being overcome. As hope in the one case might be half the victory, so despondency in the other would be likely to insure defeat. The latter would debilitate and weaken, while the former would co-operate with and increase strength. You that have good evidence that you have grace in your hearts, have, then, all that you can need to encourage you. The Captain of your salvation will assuredly conduct you to victory in the end. He who is able to uphold you has promised that you shall overcome, and his promise shall never fail. Resting on that promise, be faithful to your part, and ere long the song of victory shall be yours, and the crown of victory he will place, with his own hands, upon your head.

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The Holy Spirit Forever to be Communicated to the Saints, in the Grace of Love, or Divine Love

"Charity never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease;
whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." -- **1 Corinthians 13:8**

In the entire context, the drift of the apostle is, to show the superiority of charity over all the other graces of the Spirit. And in this chapter he sets forth its excellence by three things: *first,* by showing that it is the most essential thing, and that all other gifts are nothing without it; *second,* by showing that from it all good dispositions and behavior do arise; and, *third,* by showing that it is the most durable of all gifts, and shall remain when the church of God shall be in its most perfect state, and when the

other gifts of the Spirit shall have vanished away. And in the text may be observed two things: —

First, that one property of charity, by which its excellence is set forth, is, that it is unfailing and everlasting "Charity never faileth." This naturally follows the last words of the preceding verse, that "charity endureth all things." There the apostle declares the durableness of charity, as it appears in its withstanding the shock of all the opposition that can be made against it in the world. And now he proceeds further, and declares that charity not only endures to the end of *time*, but also throughout *eternity* — "Charity *never* faileth." When all temporal things shall have failed, this shall still abide, and abide forever. We may also observe in the text,

Second, that herein charity is distinguished from all the other gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy, and the gift of tongues, and the gift of knowledge, etc. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;" but "charity never faileth." By the knowledge here spoken of, is not meant spiritual and divine knowledge in general; for surely there will be such knowledge hereafter in heaven, as well as now on earth, and vastly more than there is on earth, as the apostle expressly declares in the following verses. The knowledge that Christians have of God, and Christ, and spiritual things, and in fact all their *knowledge,* as that word is commonly understood, shall not vanish away, but shall be gloriously increased and perfected in heaven, which is a world of light as well as love. But by the knowledge which the apostle says shall vanish away, is meant a particular miraculous gift that was in the church of God in those days. For the apostle, as we have seen, is here comparing charity with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit — those extraordinary gifts which were common in the church in those days, one of which was the gift of prophecy, and another the gift of tongues, or the power of speaking in languages that had never been learned. Both these gifts are mentioned in the text; and the apostle says they shall fail and cease. And another gift was the gift of knowledge, or the *word* of knowledge, as it is called in the eighth verse of the previous chapter, where it is so spoken of as to show that it was a different thing, both from that speculative knowledge which

is obtained from reason and study, and also from that spiritual or divine knowledge that comes from the saving influence of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It was a particular gift of the Spirit with which some persons were endowed, whereby they were enabled by immediate inspiration to understand mysteries, or the mysterious prophecies and types of the Scriptures, which the apostle speaks of in the second verse of this chapter, saying, “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,” etc. It is this miraculous gift which the apostle here says shall vanish away, together with the other miraculous gifts of which he speaks, such as prophecy, and the gift of tongues, etc. All these were extraordinary gifts bestowed for a season for the introduction and establishment of Christianity in the world, and when this their end was gained, they were all to fail and cease. But charity was never to cease.

Thus the apostle plainly teaches, as the doctrine of the text:

THAT THAT GREAT FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, IN WHICH THE HOLY GHOST SHALL, NOT ONLY FOR A SEASON, BUT EVERLASTINGLY, BE COMMUNICATED TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, IS CHARITY, OR DIVINE LOVE.

That the meaning and truth of this doctrine may be better understood, I would speak to it in the four following propositions: *first,* The Spirit of Christ will be everlastingly given to his Church and people, to influence and dwell in them; *second*, There are other fruits of the Spirit besides divine love, wherein the Spirit of God is communicated to his church; *third,* These other fruits are but for a season, and either have already, or will at some time, cease; *fourth,* That charity, or divine love, is that great and unfailing fruit of the Spirit, in which his everlasting influence and indwelling in the saints, or in his church, shall appear.

I. *The Spirit of Christ is given to his church and people everlastingly, to influence and dwell in them.* — TheHoly Spirit is the great purchase, or purchased gift, of Christ. The chief and sum of all the good things in this life and in the life to come, that are purchased for the church, is the Holy Spirit. And as he is the great purchase, so he is the great promise, or the

great thing promised by God and Christ to the church; as said the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32, 33) — "This Jesus,... being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." And this great purchase and promise of Christ is forever to be giventohis church. He has promised that his church shall continue, and expressly declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And that it may be preserved, he has given his Holy Spirit to every true member of it, and promised the continuance of that Spirit forever. His own language is (John 14:16, 17), "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Man, in his first estate in Eden, had the Holy Spirit; but he lost it by his disobedience. But a way has been provided by which it may be restored, and now it is given a second time, never more to depart from the saints. The Spirit of God is so given to his own people as to become truly theirs. It was, indeed, given to our first parents in their state of innocence, and dwelt with them, but not in the same sense in which it is given to, and dwells in, believers in Christ. They had no proper right or sure title to the Spirit, and it was not finally and forever given to them, as it is to believers in Christ; for if it had been, they never would have lost it. But the Spirit of Christ is not only communicated to those that are converted, but he is made over to them by a sure covenant, so that he is become their own. Christ is become theirs, and therefore his fullness is theirs, and therefore his Spirit is theirstheir purchased, and promised, and sure possession. But,

II. *There are other fruits of the Spirit besides that which summarily consists in charity, or divine love, wherein the Spirit of God is communicated to his church*. For example,

1. *The Spirit of God has been communicated to his church in extraordinary gifts, such as the gift of miracles, the gift of inspiration,*

etc. — The Spirit of God. seems to have been communicated to the church in such gifts, formerly to the prophets under the Old Testament, and to the apostles, and evangelists, and prophets, and to the generality of the early ministers of the gospel, and also to multitudes of common Christians, under the New Testament. To them were given such gifts as the gift of prophecy, and the gift of tongues, and the gift called the gift of knowledge, and others mentioned in the context, and in the foregoing chapter. And besides these,

2 *There are the common and ordinary gifts of the Spirit of God.* — These, in all ages, have more or less been bestowed on many natural, unconverted men, in common convictions of sin, and common illuminations, and common religious affections, which, though they have nothing in them of the nature of divine love, or of true and saving grace, are yet the fruits of the Spirit, in the sense that they are the effect of his influences on the hearts of men. And as to faith and hope, if there be nothing of divine love with them, there can be no more of the Spirit of God in them than is common to natural unregenerate men. This is clearly implied by the apostle, when he says in this chapter, “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” All saving faith and hope have love in them as ingredients, and as their essence; and if this ingredient be taken out, there is nothing left but the body without the spirit. It is nothing saving; but at best, only a common fruit of the Spirit. But,

III. *All these other fruits of the Spirit are but for a season, and either have already ceased, or at some time will cease.* — Asto the miraculous gifts of prophecy and tongues, etc., they are but of a temporary use, and cannot be continued in heaven. They were given only as an extraordinary means of grace that God was once pleased to grant to his church in the world. But when the saints that once enjoyed the use of these means went to heaven, such means of grace ceased, for they were no longer needful. There is no occasion for any means of grace in heaven, whether ordinary, such as the stated and common means of God’s house, or extraordinary, such as the gifts of tongues, and of knowledge, and of prophecy. I say, there is no occasion for any of these means of grace to be continued in

heaven, because there the end of all means of grace is already fully obtained in the perfect sanctification and happiness of God's people. The apostle, speaking in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, of the various means of grace, says that they are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." But when this has come to pass, and the saints are perfected, and are already come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, then there will be no further occasion for any of these means, whether ordinary or extraordinary. It is in this respect very much as it is with the fruits of the field, which stand in need of tillage, and rain, and sunshine, till they are ripe and gathered in, and then they need them no more.

And as these miraculous gifts of the Spirit were but temporary with regard to those particular persons that enjoyed them, so they are but for a season with regard to the church of God taken as a collective body. These gifts are not fruits of the Spirit that were given to be continued to the church throughout all ages. They were continued in the church, or at least were granted from time to time, though not without some considerable intermissions, from the beginning of the world till the canon of the Scriptures was completed. They were bestowed on the church before the beginning of the sacred canon, that is, before the book of Job and the five books of Moses were written. People had the Word of God then in another way, viz. by immediate revelation from time to time given to eminent persons, who were, as it were, fathers in the church of God, and this revelation handed down from them to others by oral tradition. It was a very common thing then, for the Spirit of God to communicate himself in dreams and visions, as appears by several passages in the book of Job. They had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit before the flood. God immediately and miraculously revealed himself to Adam and Eve, and so to Abel, and to Enoch, who, we are informed (Jude 14), had the gift of prophecy. And so Noah had immediate revelations made to him, and he warned the old world from God; and Christ, by his Spirit speaking through him, went and preached to the spirits that are now in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited while the ark was preparing (1 Pet. 3:19, 20). And so Abraham and

Isaac and Jacob were favored with immediate revelations; and Joseph had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and so had Job and his friends. From this time, there seems to have been an intermission of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit until the time of Moses; and from his time they were continued in a succession of prophets, that was kept up, though not again without some interruptions, till the time of Malachi. After that, there seems to have been a long intermission of several hundred years, till the dawn of the gospel day, when the Spirit began again to be given in his extraordinary gifts, as to Anna, and Simeon, and Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and Mary, and Joseph, and John the Baptist.

These communications of the Spirit were given to make way for him who hath the Spirit without measure, the great prophet of God, by whom the Spirit is communicated to all other prophets. And in the days of his flesh, his disciples had a measure of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, being enabled thus to teach and to work miracles. But after the resurrection and ascension, was the most full and remarkable effusion of the Spirit in his miraculous gifts that ever took place, beginning with the day of Pentecost, after Christ had risen and ascended to heaven. And in consequence of this, not only here and there an extraordinary person was endowed with these extraordinary gifts, but they were common in the church, and so continued during the lifetime of the apostles, or till the death of the last of them, even the apostle John, which took place about a hundred years from the birth of Christ; so that the first hundred years of the Christian era, or the first century, was the era of miracles. But soon after that, the canon of Scripture being completed when the apostle John had written the book of Revelation, which he wrote not long before his death, these miraculous gifts were no longer continued in the church. For there was now completed an established written revelation of the mind and will of God, wherein God had fully recorded a standing and all-sufficient rule for his church in all ages. And the Jewish church and nation being overthrown, and the Christian church and the last dispensation of the church of God being established, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer needed, and therefore they ceased; for though they had been continued in the church for so many ages, yet then they failed, and God caused them to fail because there was no further occasion for them. And so was fulfilled the saying of the text, “Whether there be prophecies, they

shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." And now there seems to be an end to all such fruits of the Spirit as these, and we have no reason to expect them any more. And as to those fruits of the Spirit that are common, such as the conviction, illumination, belief, etc., which are common both to the godly and ungodly, these are given in all ages of the church in the world; and yet with respect to the persons that have these common gifts, they will cease when they come to die; and with respect to the church of God considered collectively, they will cease, and there will be no more of them after the day of judgment. I pass, then, to show, as proposed,

IV. *That charity, or divine love, is that great fruit of the Spirit, that never fails, and in which his continued and everlasting influence and indwelling in his church shall appear and be manifest.* — We have seen that the Spirit of Christ is forever given to the church of Christ, and given that it may dwell in his saints forever, in influences that shall never fail. And therefore however many fruits of the Spirit may be but temporary, and have their limits where they fail, yet it must be that there is some way of the Spirit's influence, and some fruit of that influence, which is unfailing and eternal. And charity, or divine love, is that fruit, in communicating, and nourishing, and exercising which, his unfailing and eternal influences appear. This is a fruit of the Spirit that never fails or ceases in the church of Christ, whether we consider it with respect to its particular members, or regard it as a collective body. And,

1. *We may consider the church of Christ with respect to the particular members of which it consists.* — Andhere it will appear that charity, or Christian love, is an unfailing fruit of the Spirit. Every one of the true members of Christ's invisible church is possessed of this fruit of the Spirit in the heart. Divine or Christian love is implanted, and dwells, and reigns there, as an everlasting fruit of the Spirit, and one that never fails. It never fails in this world, but remains through all trials and oppositions, for the apostle tells us (Rom. 8:38, 39) that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And it ceases not when the saints come to die. When the apostles and others of their day died and went to heaven, they left all their miraculous gifts

behind them with their bodies. But they did not leave the love that was in their hearts behind them, but carried that with them to heaven, where it was gloriously perfected. Though when wicked men die, who have had the common influences of the Spirit, their gifts shall eternally cease, yet death never overthrows Christian love, that great fruit of the Spirit, in any that have it. They that have it, may and shall leave behind them many other fruits of the Spirit which they had in common with wicked men. And though they shall leave all that was common in their faith, and hope, and all that did not pertain to this divine and holy love, yet this love they shall not leave behind, but it shall go with them to eternity, and shall be perfected there, and shall live and reign with perfect and glorious dominion in their souls forever and ever. And so, again,

2. *We may consider the church of Christ collectively, or as a body.* — And here, again, it will appear that charity, or Christian love, shall never fail. Though other fruits of the Spirit fail in it, this shall never fail. Of old, when there were interruptions of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the church, and when there were seasons in which no prophet or inspired person appeared that was possessed of such gifts, still there never was any total interruption of this excellent fruit or influence of the Spirit. Miraculous gifts were intermitted through the long time extending from Malachi to near the birth of Christ; but in all this time, the influence of the Spirit, in keeping up divine love in the church, was never suspended. As God always had a church of saints in the world, from the first creation of the church after the fall, so this influence and fruit of his Spirit never failed in it. And when, after the completion of the canon of the Scriptures, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit seemed finally to have ceased and failed in the church, this influence of the Spirit in causing divine love in the hearts of his saints did not cease, but has been kept up through all ages from that time to this, and so will be to the end of the world. And at the end of the world, when the church of Christ shall be settled in its last, and most complete, and its eternal state, and all common gifts, such as convictions and illuminations, and all miraculous gifts, shall be eternally at an end, yet then divine love shall not fail, but shall be brought to its most glorious perfection in every individual member of the ransomed church above. Then, in every heart, that love which now seems as but a spark, shall be kindled to a bright and glowing flame, and every ransomed

soul shall be as it were in a blaze of divine and holy love, and shall remain and grow in this glorious perfection and blessedness through all eternity!

I shall give but a single reason for the truth of the doctrine which has thus been presented. And the great reason why it is so, that other fruits of the Spirit fail, and the great fruit of love remains, is, that *love is the great end of all the other fruits and gifts of the Spirit*. The principle and the exercises of divine love in the heart, and the fruits of it in the conduct, and the happiness that consists in and flows from it these things are the great end of all the fruits of the Spirit that fail. Charity or divine love is the end, to which all the inspiration, and all the miraculous gifts that ever were in the world, are but the means. They were only *means* of grace, but charity or divine love is *grace itself;* and not only so, but the sum of all grace. Revelation and miracles were never given for any other end but only to promote holiness, and build up the kingdom of Christ in men's hearts; but Christian love is the sum of all holiness, and its growth is but the growth of Christ's kingdom in the soul. The extraordinary fruits of the Spirit were given for revealing and confirming the word and will of God, that men by believing might be conformed to that will: and they were valuable and good only so far as they tended to this end. And hence when that end was obtained, and when the canon of the Scriptures, the great and powerful means of grace, was completed, and the ordinances of the New Testament and of the last dispensation were fully established, the extraordinary gifts ceased, and came to an end, as being no further useful. Miraculous gifts being a means to a further end, they are good no further than as they tend to that end. But divine love is that end itself, and therefore remains when the means to it cease. The end is not only a good, but the highest kind of good in itself, and therefore remains forever. So it is with respect to the common gifts of the Spirit that are given in all ages, such as illumination, conviction, etc. They have no good in themselves, and are no further good than as they tend to promote that grace and holiness which radically and summarily consist in divine love; and therefore when this end is once fully answered, there shall be an end forever of these common gifts, while divine love, which is the end of them all, shall eternally remain.

In the application of this subject, I would remark,

1. *That there seems to be no reason to think, as some have thought, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are to be restored to the church in the future and glorious times of her latter-day prosperity and blessedness.* — Manydivines have been of the opinion, that when the latter-day glory of the church, which is spoken of in the Word of God, shall come, there will again be prophets, and men endowed with the gifts of tongues and of working miracles, as was the case in the times of the apostles; and some now living seem to be of the same mind.

But from what the apostle says in the text and context, it seems as thought we had no reason to imagine any such thing from what the Scriptures say of the gloriousness of those times, or because it speaks of the state of the church then as being more glorious than ever before, and as though the Spirit of God would then be poured out in more abundant measure than ever in times past. All these things may be, and yet there be no such extraordinary gifts bestowed on the church. When the Spirit of God is poured out for the purpose of producing and promoting divine love, he is poured out in a more excellent way than when he is manifested in miraculous gifts. This the apostle expressly teaches in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, where, after enumerating many miraculous gifts, he advises Christians to covet or desire the best of them, but then adds, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," namely, to seek the influence of the Spirit of God, working charity or divine love in the heart. Surely the Scriptures, when speaking of the future glorious state of the church as being such an excellent state, give us no reason to conclude that the Spirit of God will be poured out then in any other way than in the most excellent way. And doubtless the most excellent way of the Spirit is for the most excellent state of the church.

The future state of the church being so much more perfect than in previous times, does not tend to prove that then there shall be miraculous gifts, but rather the contrary. For the apostle himself, in the text and context, speaks of these extraordinary gifts ceasing and vanishing away to give place for a kind of fruits or influences of the Spirit that are more perfect. If you do but read the text in connection with the two following verses, you will see that the reason implied why prophecy and tongues fail, and charity remains, is this, that the imperfect gives way to the

perfect, and the less excellent to the more excellent; and the more excellent, he declares, is charity or love. Prophecy and miracles argue the imperfection of the state of the church, rather than its perfection. For they are means designed by God as a stay or support, or as a leading string, if I may so say, to the church in its infancy, rather than as means adapted to it in its full growth; and as such the apostle seems to speak of them. When the Christian church first began, after the ascension of Christ, it was in its infancy, and then it needed miracles, etc., to establish it; but, being once established, and the canon of the Scriptures being completed, they ceased, which, according to the apostle's arguing, shows their imperfection, and how much inferior they are to that fruit or influence of the Holy Spirit which is seen in divine love. Why, then, should we expect that they should be restored again when the church is in its most perfect state? All these miraculous gifts the apostle seems to call "childish things," in comparison with the nobler fruit of Christian love. They are adapted to the childish state of the church, while holy love is more to be expected in its full-grown and manly state; and in themselves they are childish, in comparison with that holy love which will so abound in the church when it comes to its perfect stature in Christ Jesus.

Nor is the gloriousness of the future times of the church any argument for the continuance, in those times, of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For surely the state of the church then will not be more glorious than the heavenly state; and yet the apostle teaches, that in the heavenly state all these gifts shall be at an end, and the influence of the Spirit in producing divine love only shall remain. Nor does it appear that there shall be any need of miraculous gifts in order to the bringing about of the future glorious times of the church; for God is able to bring them about without the instrumentality of these gifts. If the Spirit of God be poured out in only his gracious influences in converting souls, and in kindling divine love in them in such measure as he may and will, this will be enough, without new revelations or miracles, to produce all the effects that need to be produced in order to the bringing in of the glorious times of which we are speaking; as we may all be convinced by the little we have seen in the late outpouring of the Spirit in this and the neighboring towns. If we needed any new rule to go by, and the common influences of the Spirit, together with the Word of God, were insufficient, then there might be

some necessity for restoring miracles. But there is no need whatever of new Scriptures being given, or of any additions being made to those we have, for they are in themselves a perfect rule for our faith and practice; and as there is no need of a new canon of Scripture, so there is no need of those miraculous gifts, the great object of which was, either to confirm the Scriptures, or to make up for the want of them when as yet they had not been given by the inspiring Spirit.

2. *The subject we have been considering should make persons exceedingly cautious how they give heed to anything that may look like a new revelation, or that may claim to be any extraordinary gift of the Spirit.* — Sometimes a person may have an impression in his mind as to something that he thinks immediately revealed to him that is to come to pass concerning himself or some of his relatives or friends; or as to something that is to come to pass that before was hid from him, and if it had not been revealed, would remain still a secret; or, perhaps, he thinks it has been revealed to him, what is the spiritual state of some other person, or of his own soul, in some other way than by the scriptural marks and evidences of grace in the heart. Sometimes persons imagine that they have an immediate direction from heaven to go and do this, or that, or the other thing, by impressions immediately made on their minds, or in some other way than by learning from Scripture or reason that it is their duty. And sometimes they fancy that God immediately reveals to them by a dream, what the future shall be. But all these things, if they were from God's Spirit, would be of the nature of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which the apostle says do cease and are done away, and which, having long since failed, there is no reason to suppose that God will restore again. And if they are not from God's Spirit, they are but gross delusions. And once more,

3. *The subject teaches how greatly we should value those influences and fruits of the Spirit which are evidences of true grace in the soul, and which are all summarily included in charity or divine love.* — This is the end and design of the apostle in the text and context, to teach us to value this charity or love, by showing that it never fails, though all the miraculous gifts of the Spirit do fail and come to an end. This grace is the most excellent fruit of the Spirit, without which the most extraordinary

and miraculous gifts are nothing. This is the great *end* to which they are but the *means;* and which is, of course, more excellent than all these means. Let us all, therefore, earnestly seek this blessed fruit of the Spirit, and let us seek that it may abound in our souls; that the love of God may more and more be shed abroad in our hearts, and that we may love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and love one another as Christ hath loved us. Thus we shall possess the richest of all treasures, and the highest and most excellent of all graces. Having within us that love which is immortal in its nature, we shall have the surest evidence that our immortality will be blessed, and that our hope of eternal life is that good hope which shall never disappoint us. Love cherished in the soul on earth, will be to us the foretaste of, and the preparation for, that world which is a world of love, and where the Spirit of love reigns and blesses forever.

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The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister

"He was a burning and a shining light." -- **John 5:35**

That discourse of our blessed Savior we have an account of in this chapter from the 17th verse to the end, was occasioned by the Jews' murmuring against him, and persecuting him for his healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and bidding him to take up his bed and walk on the sabbath day. Christ largely vindicates himself in this discourse by asserting his fellowship with God the Father in nature and operations. And thereby implicitly showing himself to be Lord of the sabbath, and by declaring to the Jews that God the Father, and he with him, did *work hitherto,* to even to this time. Although it be said that God rested on the seventh day from all his works, yet indeed God continues to work hitherto, even to this very day, with respect to his greatest work, the work of redemption, or new creation, which he carries on by Jesus Christ, his

Son. Pursuant to the designs of which work was his showing mercy to fallen men by healing their diseases, and delivering them from the calamities they brought on themselves by sin. This great work of redemption God carries on from the beginning of the world to this time; and his rest from it will not come till the resurrection, which Christ speaks of in the 21st and following verses: the finishing of this redemption as to its procurement, being in his own resurrection; and as to the application, in the general resurrection and eternal judgment, spoken of from verse 20 to verse 30. So that notwithstanding both the rest on the seventh day, and also the rest that Joshua gave the children of Israel in Canaan; yet the great rest of the Redeemer from his work, and so of his people with him and in him, yet remains, as the apostle observes, Heb. Chap. 4. This will be at the resurrection and general judgment; which Christ here teaches the Jews was to be brought to pass by the Son of God by the Father's appointment, and so the works of God to be finished by him.

And inasmuch as this vindication was so far from satisfying the Jews, that it did but further enrage them, because hereby he made himself equal with God, Christ therefore refers them to the witness of John the Baptist; whose testimony they must acquiesce in, or else be inconsistent with themselves; because they had generally acknowledged John to be a great prophet, and seemed for a while mightily affected and taken with it, that God after so long a withholding the spirit of prophecy, had raised up so great a prophet among them and it is concerning him that Christ speaks in this verse wherein is the text, "He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

In order to a right understanding and improvement of the words of the text, we may observe,

1. What Christ here takes notice of in John, and declares concerning him, *viz.* That *he was a burning and a shining light*. He was a light to the church of Israel, to reveal the mind and will of God to them, after a long-continued dark season, and after they had been destitute of any prophet to instruct them for some ages. He arose on Israel, as the morning star, the forerunner of the Sun of righteousness, to introduce the day-spring, or dawning of the gospel day, to give light to them that till then had sat in

the darkness of perfect night, which was the shadow of death; to give them the knowledge of salvation; as Zacharias his father declares at his circumcision. Luke 1:76-79, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And he was a burning light, as he was full of a spirit of fervent piety and holiness, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, having his heart warmed and inflamed with a great love to Christ, being that *friend of the bridegroom that stood and heard him, and rejoiced greatly because of the bridegroom's voice*; and was glad that Christ increased, though he decreased, John 3:29, 30. And was animated with a holy zeal in the work of the ministry: he came, in this respect, in the spirit and power of Elias. As Elias was zealous in bearing testimony against the corruption, apostasies, and idolatries of Israel in his day, so was John the Baptist in testifying against the wickedness of the Jews in his day. As Elias zealously reproved the sins of all sorts of persons in Israel, not only the sins of the common people, but of their great ones, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jezebel, and their false prophets; with what zeal did John the Baptist reprove all sorts of persons, not only the publicans and soldiers, but the Pharisees and Sadducees, telling them plainly that they were a generation of vipers, and rebuked the wickedness of Herod in his most beloved lust, though Herod sought his life for it, as Ahab and Ahaziah did Elijah's! As Elias was much in warning the people of God's approaching judgments, denouncing God's awful wrath against Ahab, Jezebel, and Ahaziah, and the prophets of Baal, and the people in general; so was John the Baptist much in warning the people to fly from the wrath to come, telling them in the most awakening manner, that the "axe was laid at the root of the tree, and that every tree that brought not forth good fruit should be hewn down and cast into the fire; and that he that came after him had his fan in his hand, and that he would thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

John the Baptist was not only a burning but a shining light. He was so in

his doctrine, having more of the gospel in his preaching than the former prophets, or at least the gospel exhibited with greater light and clearness, more plainly pointing forth the person that was to be the great Redeemer, and declaring his errand into the world, to take away the sin of the world, as a lamb offered in sacrifice to God, and the necessity that all, even the most strictly moral God, and the necessity that all, even the most strictly moral and religious, stood in front of him, being by nature a generation of vipers. And the spiritual nature of his kingdom, consisting not in circumcision, or outward baptism, or any other external performance or privileges, but in the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, a being *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*

In this clearness with which he gave knowledge of salvation to God's people, John was a bright light, *and among them that had been born of women there had not arisen a greater than he.* In this brightness this harbinger of the gospel day excelled all the other prophets, as the morning star reflects more of the light of the sun than any other star, and is the brightest of all the stars.

He also shown bright in his conversation, and his eminent mortification and renunciation of the enjoyments of the world. His great diligence and laboriousness in his work, his impartiality in it, declaring the mind and will of God to all sorts without distinction; his great humility, rejoicing in the increase of the honor of Christ, though his honor was diminished, as the brightness of the morning star diminishes as the light of the sun increases; and in his faithfulness and courage, still declaring the mind and will of God, though it cost him his own life. Thus his light shone before men.

2. We may observe to what purpose Christ declares these things of John in the text, *viz.*, to show how great and excellent a person he was, and worthy that the Jews should regard his testimony: great are the things which Christ elsewhere says of John the Baptist, as in Mat. 11:7-14. He speaks of him as a *prophet; and more than a prophet;* and one, *than whom, there had not risen a greater among them that had been born of women.* He observes how great and excellent a light he was in the text, to show the Jews how inexcusable they were in not receiving the testimony he had given of him; as you may see (John 5:31-33).

Therefore that which I would observe from the text to be the subject of my present discourse is this:

It is the excellency of a minister of the gospel to be both a burning and a shining light.

Thus we see it is in Christ's esteem, the great Prophet of God, and Light of the world, Head of the church, and Lord of the harvest, and the great Lord and Master, whose messengers all ministers of the gospel are.

John the Baptist was a minister of the gospel. And he was so more eminently than the ancient prophets. For though God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake the gospel by them; yet John the Baptist was a great minister of the gospel in a manner distinguished from them. He is reckoned in Scripture the first that introduced the gospel day, after the law and the prophets, Luke 16:16, "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached." And his preaching is called the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God, Mark 1:1. He came on that errand, to give knowledge of salvation to God's people, through the remission of their sins (as his father Zacharias observes, Luke 1:77), and to preach these glad tidings that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

John being thus eminently a minister of the gospel, and a burning and shining light, being taken notice of by Christ as his great excellency, we may justly hence observe, that herein consists the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel.

I would, by divine assistance, handle the subject in the following method:

I. I would show that Christ's design in the appointment of the order and office of ministers of the gospel is that they may be lights to the souls of men.

II. I would show what is implied in their being burning lights.

III. I would show what is implied in their being shining lights.

IV. I would show that it is the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel to have these things united in them, to be both burning and shining lights.

V. I would apply these things to all that Christ has called to the work of the gospel ministry, showing how much it concerns them earnestly to endeavor that they may be burning and shining lights.

VI. Show what ministers of the gospel ought to do that they may be so.

VII. Say something briefly concerning the duty of a people that are under the care of a gospel minister, correspondent to those things that Christ has taught us concerning the end and excellency of a gospel minister.

I. I would observe that Christ's design in the appointment of the order and office of ministers of the gospel was, that they might be lights to the souls of men.

Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. The devils are the rulers of the darkness of this world. But Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of light. The designs of his kingdom are carried on by light. His people *are not of the night, nor of darkness*, but are *the children of the light,* as they are the children of God, who is *the Father of lights*, and as it were a boundless fountain of infinite pure and bright light. 1 John 1:5; Jam. 1:17.

Man by the fall extinguished that divine light that shone in this world in its first estate. The Scripture represents the wickedness of man as reducing the world to that state wherein it was when it was yet without form and void, and darkness filled it. Jer. 4:22, 23, "For my people is foolish, they have not known me: they are sottish children; and they have non understanding: they are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light." But God in infinite mercy has made glorious provision for the restoration of light to this fallen dark world. He has sent him who is the brightness of his own glory into the world, to be the light of the world. "He is the true light that lighteth every man that

cometh into the world," *i.e.* every man in the world that ever has any true light. But in his wisdom and mercy, he is pleased to convey his light to men by means and instruments. And has sent forth his messengers, and appointed ministers in his church to be subordinate lights, and to shine with the communications of his light, and to reflect the beams of his glory on the souls of men.

There is an analogy between the divine constitution and disposition of things in the natural and in the spiritual world. The wise Creator has not left the natural world without light. But in this our solar system has set one great light, immensely exceeding all the rest, shining perpetually with a transcendent fullness and strength, to enlighten the whole. And he hath appointed other lesser, subordinate, or dependent lights, that shine with the communications and reflections of something of his brightness. So it is in the spiritual world; there God hath appointed Jesus Christ as the Sun of righteousness. The church of God has not the sun to be her light by day, nor for brightness does the moon give light to her, but the Lord is her everlasting light, and her God her glory. The new Jerusalem has no need of the sun, nor the moon; for the Lamb is the light thereof. And the ministers of Christ are, as it were, the stars that encompass this glorious fountain of light, to receive and reflect his beams, and give light to the souls of men. As Christ therefore is in Scripture called the Sun, so are his ministers called stars. So are the twelve apostles, the chief ministers of the Christian church, called, Rev. 12:1, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." And so are the ordinary ministers of the gospel called, Rev. 1:16, "And he had in his right hand seven stars." And verse 20, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." Here also ministers of the gospel are implicitly compared to those lamps that enlightened the temple at Jerusalem, upon the tops of the golden candlesticks: and more expressly in Zec. 4:2, "I have looked, and behold a candlestick, all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon."

These lamps have all their oil from Christ, and are enkindled by his flame, and shine by his beams; and being thus dependent on him, they are near

to him, and held in his right hand, that they may receive light from him, to communicate to others.

The use of a light is threefold; to discover, to refresh, and to direct.

The first use of a light is to discover things, or make them manifest. Without light nothing is to be seen. Eph. 5:13, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." Ministers are set to be lights to the souls of men in this respect, as they are to be the means of imparting divine truth to them, and bringing into their view the most glorious and excellent objects, and of leading them to and assisting them in the contemplation of those things that angels desire to look into. The means of their obtaining that knowledge is infinitely more important, and more excellent and useful, than that of the greatest statesmen or philosophers, even that which is spiritual and divine. They are set to be the means of bringing men out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and of bringing them to the infinite fountain of light, that in his light they may see light: they are set to instruct men, and impart to them that knowledge by which they may know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

Another use of light is to refresh and delight the beholders. Darkness is dismal. The light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. Light is refreshing to those who have long sat in darkness. They therefore that watch and keep awake through a dark night, long and wait for the light of the morning; and the wise man observes, Pro. 15:30, "That the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart." Spiritual light is especially refreshing and joyful. Psa. 97:11, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." They that see the light of Christ, the star that hath arisen out of Jacob, are refreshed and do rejoice, and the wise men that saw the star that showed them where Christ was, Mat. 2:10, "And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Ministers are set in the church of God to be the instruments of this comfort and refreshment to the souls of men, to be the instruments of leading souls to the God of all consolation, and fountain of their happiness. They are sent as Christ was, and as coworkers with him, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them

that are bound, and to comfort all that mourn. They are to lead those that "labor and are heavy laden" to their true rest, and to speak a word in season to him that is weary. They are set to be ministers of the consolation and joy of the saints. 2 Cor. 1:24, "We have not dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy."

The third use of light is to direct. 'Tis by light that we see where to go. "He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes," and is in danger of stumbling and falling into mischief. 'Tis by light that men see what to do, and are enabled to work. In the night, Christ tells us, no man can work. Ministers are set to be lights to men's souls in this respect also. As Zacharias observes of John the Baptist, Luke 1:79, "To guide our feet in the way of peace." Ministers have the record of God committed to them that they may hold that forth, which God has given to be to man as a light shining in a dark place, to guide them in the way through this dark world, to regions of eternal light. Ministers are set to be instruments of conveying to men that true wisdom spoken of Job 28, "Which cannot be gotten for gold, nor shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; which cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire."

I proceed now to the

II. Thing proposed, *viz.* to show what is implied in a minister of the gospel's being a burning light.

There are these two things that seem naturally to be understood by this expression, *viz.* that his heart be filled with much of the holy ardor of a spirit of true piety; and that he be fervent and zealous in his administrations.

First, that his heart be full of much of the holy ardor of a spirit of true piety. We read of the power of godliness. True grace is no dull, inactive, ineffectual principle. It is a powerful thing. There is an exceeding energy in it. And the reason is, that God is in it; it is a divine principle, a participation of the divine nature, and a communication of divine life, of

the life of a risen Savior, who exerts himself in the hearts of the saints, after the power of an endless life. They that have true grace in them, *they live*; but not by their own life; *but Christ lives in them*. His Holy Spirit becomes in them a living principle and spring of divine life; the energy and power of which is in Scripture compared to fire. Mat. 3:11, " I indeed baptize you with water; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." True piety is not a thing remaining only in the head, or consisting in any speculative knowledge or opinions, or outward morality, or forms of religion. It reaches the heart, is chiefly seated there, and burns there. There is a holy ardor in everything that belongs to true grace. True faith is an ardent thing, and so is true repentance. There is a holy power and ardor in true spiritual comfort and joy; yea, even in true Christian humility, submission, and meekness. The reason is, that divine love or charity is the sum of all true grace, which is a holy flame enkindled in the soul. It is by this therefore especially, that a minister of the gospel is a *burning light*. A minister that is so has his soul enkindled with the heavenly flame. His heart burns with love to Christ, and fervent desires of the advancement of his kingdom and glory. And also [it burns] with ardent love to the souls of men, and desires for their salvation.

Second, the inward holy ardor of his soul is exercised and manifested in his being *zealous and fervent in his administrations*. For he is a *burning light*. [This] implies that his spiritual heat and holy ardor is not for himself only, but is communicative and for the benefit of others. He is ardent, as he is a *light*, or in the performance of the duties of that office wherein he is set to be a light in the church of Christ. His fervent zeal, which has its foundation and spring in that holy and powerful flame of love to God and man, that is in his heart, appears in the fervency of his prayers to God, for and with his people. And in the earnestness and power with which he preaches the Word of God, declares to sinners their misery, and warns them to fly from the wrath to come, and reproves and testifies against all ungodliness; and the unfeigned earnestness and compassion with which he invites the weary and heavy laden to their Savior; and the fervent love with which he counsels and comforts the saints; and the holy zeal, courage, and stedfastness, with which he maintains the exercise of discipline in the house of God, notwithstanding

all the opposition he meets with in that difficult part of the ministerial work; and in the diligence and earnestness with which he attends every duty of his ministerial function, whether public or private.

But I hasten to the

III. Thing proposed in the handling of this subject, *viz.* to show what is implied in a minister's being a *shining light*.

There are three things that seem to be naturally signified by it.

First, that he be *pure, clear, and full in his doctrine*. A minister is set to be a light to men's souls, by teaching, or doctrine. And if he be a shining light in this respect, the light of his doctrine must be bright and full. It must be pure without mixtures of darkness. And therefore he must be sound in the faith, not one that is of a reprobate mind. In doctrine he must show uncorruptness; otherwise his *light* will be darkness. He must not lead his people into errors, but teach them the truth only, guiding their feet into the way of peace, and leading them in the right ways of the Lord.

He must be one that is *able to teach;* not one that is raw, ignorant, or unlearned, and but little versed in the things that he is to teach others; *not a novice,* or one that is *unskillful* in *the word of righteousness*. He must be one that is well studied in divinity, well acquainted with the written Word of God, mighty in the Scriptures, and able to instruct and convince gainsayers.

And in order to be a *shining light*, he must be one that really knows what religion is; one that is truly acquainted with that Savior and way of salvation, that he is to teach to others, that he may *speak the things that he knows, and testify the things that he has seen*, and not be a blind leader of the blind. He must be one that is acquainted with experimental religion, and not ignorant of the inward operations of the Spirit of God, nor of Satan' s devices; able to guide souls under their particular difficulties. Thus he must be *a scribe well instructed in things that*

pertain to the kingdom of God; one that brings forth out of his treasures things new and old.

And in order to his being a *shining light*, his doctrine must be *full.* He must not only be able to teach, but apt to teach, ready to instruct the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, and diligent in teaching in public and private; and careful and faithful to declare the whole counsel of God, and not keep back anything that may be profitable to his hearers.

Also his being a *shining light* implies that his instructions are clear and plain, accommodated to the capacity of his hearers, and tending to convey light to their understandings.

Second, another thing requisite in order to a minister's being a *shining light*, is that he be *discreet in all his administrations.* The fervent zeal that thus should animate and actuate him in his administrations should be regulated by discretion. He should not only be knowing, and able to communicate knowledge and formed to do it; but also wise, and know how to conduct himself in the house of God, as a wise builder, and a wise steward. And as he is one that God hath sent forth to labor in his field, and committed the care of his vineyard to, so he should conduct himself there as one *whom his God doth instruct to discretion.* He should not only be as *harmless as a dove,* but as *wise as a serpent;* showing himself a *workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;* and one that *knows how to govern the church of God,* and to *walk in wisdom towards those that are without.*

Third, another thing implied in a minister's being a *shining light* is that he *shines in his conversation.* If he shines never so much in his doctrine and administrations in the house of God, yet if there be not an answerable brightness in his conversation, it will have a tendency to render all ineffectual. Christ, in Mat. 5:14, 15, 16, says to his disciples (having undoubtedly a special respect to those of them that were to be sent forth to preach the gospel), "Ye are the light of the world: Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." And how does Christ direct them to give light to others? "Let your light," says he, "so shine before men, that others, seeing your *good works*, may glorify your Father which is in

heaven," And he tells the same disciples again, John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." And how should they bring forth fruit? Christ tells them, verse 10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," and verse 14, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

God sent his Son into the world to be the light of the world these two ways, *viz.* by revealing his mind and will to the world, and also by setting the world a perfect example. So ministers are set to be lights, not only as teachers, but as ensamples to the flock, 1 Peter 5:3.

The same things that ministers recommend to their hearers in their doctrine, they should also show them an example of in their practice. Thus the apostle says to Timothy, 1 Tim. 4:11, "These things command and teach," and then adds in the next verse, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." So he directs Titus, in his teaching, to recommend sobriety, gravity, temperance, patience, and other virtues, in the beginning of the second chapter of Titus. But then adds in the 7th verse, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works."

We see in natural bodies, that when heat is raised in them to a high degree, at length they begin to shine. And, as I observed before, a principle of true grace in the soul is like an inward heat, a holy ardor of a heavenly fire enkindled in the soul. This in ministers of the gospel ought to be to that degree, as to shine forth brightly in all their conversation. And there should as it were be a light about them wherever they go, exhibiting to all that behold them, the amiable, delightful image of the beauty and brightness of their glorious Master.

I proceed to the

IV. Thing proposed, which is to show that the excellency of a minister of the gospel consists in his being thus *both a burning and a shining light*.

This is manifest in two things:

First, herein his ministry is acceptable and amiable in the sight of God and men.

When light and heat are thus united in a minister of the gospel, it shows that each is genuine, and of a right kind, and that both are divine. Divine light is attended with heat. And so, on the other hand, a truly divine and holy heat and ardor is ever accompanied with light.

It is the glory of the sun that such a bright and glorious light, and such a powerful, refreshing, vivifying heat, are both together diffused from that luminary. When there is light in a minister, consisting in human learning, great speculative knowledge, and the wisdom of this world, without a spiritual warmth and ardor in his heart, and a holy zeal in his ministrations, his light is like the light of an *ignis fatuus*, and some kinds of putrefying carcasses that shine in the dark, though they are of a stinking savor. And if on the other hand a minister has warmth and zeal, without light, his heat has nothing excellent in it, but is rather to be abhorred; being like the heat of the bottomless pit, where though the fire be great, yet there is no light. To be hot in this manner, and not lightsome, is to be like an angel of darkness. But ministers by having light and heat united in them, will be like the angels of light; which for their light and brightness are called morning stars. Job 38:7, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And because of that holy ardor of divine love and zeal with which they burn, they are compared to a flaming fire. Psa. 4, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire," and are therefore called seraphims, which is a word that is derived from a root that signifies *to burn*. So that by ministers of the gospel being *burning and shining lights,* the *angels of the churches* will become like the *angels of heaven,* and those stars held in the right hand of Christ here below, will be like those morning stars above, and which is much more. Hereby ministers will be like their glorious Lord and Master; who is not only the Master of ministers of the gospel, but is the Head and Lord of the glorious angels, whom they adore, and who communicates to them the brightness in which they shine, and the flame with which they burn, and is the glorious luminary and sun of the heavenly world, from whence all the inhabitants of that world have their light and life, and all their glory. In this Sun of

righteousness is that light, whose brightness is such that the light of the sun in the firmament in comparison of it is as darkness, yea, *black as sackcloth of hair*. For he is the infinite brightness of God's glory; and of him it is said, Isa. 24:23, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount of Zion, and in Jerusalem, before his ancients, gloriously." And accompanying this bright light in him, is the infinitely intense flame of love. There is no love to be compared to his; nor ever was love both to God and man so manifested, as has been in what Christ has done and suffered. For *herein was love*! Ministers, by being burning and shining lights, become the sons of God, of whom we read that he *is light,* and that he *is love*. 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that *God is light*, and in him is no darkness at all." And chap. 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us: *God is love*, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Therefore it must needs be that ministers, by being burning and shining lights, are acceptable and amiable in the sight of God, as he delights in his own image and in the image of his Son. And hereby also they will be honorable and amiable in the sight of men, all such as have any sense of that which is truly excellent and beautiful. And it is the way to have their ministry pleasant and delightful to those of this character that sit under it.

Second, herein a minister of the gospel will be likely to answer the ends of his ministry. By this means his ministry will not only be amiable, but profitable. If a minister has light without heat, and entertains his auditory with learned discourses, without a savior of the power of godliness, or any appearance of fervency of spirit, and zeal for God and the good of souls, he may gratify itching ears, and fill the heads of his people with empty notions. But it will not be very likely to reach their hearts, or save their souls. And if, on the other hand, he be driven on with a fierce and intemperate zeal, and vehement heat, without light, he will be likely to kindle the like unhallowed flame in his people, and to fire their corrupt passions and affections; but will make them never the better, nor lead them a step towards heaven, but drive them apace the other way.

But if he approves himself in his ministry, as both a burning a shining

light, this will be the way to promote true Christianity amongst his people, and to make them both wise, good, and cause religion to flourish among them in the purity and beauty of it.

When divine light and heat attend each other in ministers of the gospel, their light will be like the beams of the sun, that do not only convey light, but give life. And converts will be likely to spring up under their ministry, as the grass and the plants of the field under the influences of the sun. And the souls of the saints will be likely to grow, and appear beautiful *as the lily,* and to *revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and their scent to be as the wine of Lebanon;* and their light will be like the light of Christ, which is the light of life, John 8:12.

If the sun should shine upon the earth with the same brightness that it doth now, yet if it were without any heat, it would give life to nothing. The world would be a desolate wilderness, with nothing growing in it. The death of every living thing must be the consequence. And the sun's light could be of no service to us, but to cause us to see our own and others' misery, without being able to help ourselves or them. On the other hand, if the sun diffused the same heat that now it does, but the world was destitute at the same time of any light, it would be equally unserviceable. Mankind having no light to guide them in their business, in tilling the field, or gathering the produce of the earth, we should be like the Egyptians in the three days' darkness, who saw not one another, nor rose from their place. And thus also death would be the unavoidable consequence. But by light and heat accompanying one another, the whole face of the earth becomes fruitful, and is adorned, and all things are quickened and flourish, and mankind enjoy both life and comfort.

I proceed to the

V. Thing proposed in handling the doctrine, to apply these things to all here present, that Christ has called to the work of the gospel ministry, observing how much it concerns such to endeavor to be burning and

shining lights.

Our office and work is most honorable, in that we are set by Christ to be lights or luminaries in the spiritual world. Light is the most glorious thing in the material world, and there are, it may be, no parts of the natural world that have so great an image of the goodness of God, as the lights or luminaries of heaven; and especially the sun, who is constantly communicating his benign influence to enlighten, quicken, and refresh the world by his beams; which is probably the reason that the worship of the sun was (as is supposed) the first idolatry that mankind fell into. But so are ministers honored by their great Lord and Master, that they are set to be that to men's souls, that the lights of heaven are to their bodies; and that they might be the instruments and vehicles of God's greatest goodness, and the most precious fruits of his eternal love to them, and means of that life, and refreshment, and joy, that are spiritual and eternal, and infinitely more precious than any benefit received by the benign beams of the sun in the firmament. And we shall be likely indeed to be the instruments of those unspeakable benefits to the souls of our fellow-creatures, if we have those qualifications, which have been shown to be the true and proper excellency of ministers of the gospel. Herein our glory will answer the honorable station Christ has set us in. And hereby our ministry will be likely to be as beneficial as our office is honorable. We shall be like Christ, and shall shine with his beams. Christ will live in us, and be seen in his life and beauty in our ministry, and in our conversation, and we shall be most likely to be the means of bringing others to him, and of their receiving of his light, and being made partakers of his life, and having his joy fulfilled in them. And this will be the way for us hereafter to be as much advanced and distinguished in our reward, as we are honored in the office and business we are called to here. In this way, those whom Christ has set to be lights in his church, and to be stars in the spiritual world here, shall be lights also in the church triumphant, and shine as stars for ever in heaven. Dan. 12:3, "And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

But if we fail of the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel, we shall not be in the sight of God the more worthy or honorable for our high

office, but the more abominable and inexcusable. Our wickedness being aggravated by God's great goodness and condescension to us, and the peculiar obligations that he laid upon us; and instead of being eminently beneficial and great blessings, as lights to reflect the beams of Christ's glory and love, we shall be so much the more hurtful and pernicious, for our being in such a station. And so shall be likely hereafter to suffer a so much more dreadful punishment. The devils in hell are so much the more odious to God, and more the objects of his wrath, because he set them in the dignity and glory of angels, the excellency of which state they are fallen from. And it is likely that those in hell that will be nearest to the fallen angels, in their state of misery, will be those that Christ once set to be angels of the churches, but through their unfaithfulness, failed of their proper excellency and end.

Here I would apply myself in a few words to the person whose intended ordination, this day, to the great work of the gospel ministry, is the occasion of this discourse.

You have now, dear sir, heard something of the nature and design of that office to which you are this day, in the name of Christ, to be solemnly set apart. You are therein called to be a light to the souls of men, a lamp in God's temple, and a star in the spiritual world. And you have heard wherein, in Christ's esteem, consists the proper excellency of one in that office, and how in this a minister of the gospel becomes like his glorious Master, and glorifies him, and is likely to be the instrument of the salvation and happiness of the souls of men, and to receive a glorious reward from the hands of God.

These, sir, are the motives that you are to be influenced by, to endeavor to be a burning and a shining light in the work of the ministry. As to the things of this world, you are not to expect outward ease, pleasure, and plenty; nor are you to depend on the friendship and respect of men; but should prepare to endure hardness, as one that is going forth as a soldier to war. But they are higher things than these, more excellent benefits than the world can afford, that Christ offers to those that approve themselves to him in this work.

God in his providence has brought you far from your native land, and

from your friends and acquaintance there. But you will have reason, not withstanding, to acknowledge the good hand of his providence towards you, if he is pleased to make you a burning and shining light in this part of his church, and by the influence of your light and heat (or rather by his divine influence with your ministry) to cause this wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose, and give it the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, and to cause you to shine in the midst of this people with warm and lightsome, quickening and comforting, beams, causing their souls to flourish, rejoice, and bear fruit like a garden of pleasant fruits under the beams of the sun.

By this means you will be to their souls the vehicle of the influences and blessings of the heavenly world, which is a world of light and love, shall be ever held in Christ's right hand, and shall be terrible to the powers of darkness; and shall see more and more of the light of Christ's glory and grace in this place, with you and this people, and shall hereafter not only shine yourself, as the brightness of the firmament, but shall meet with them in glory also, who shall shine there around you, as a bright constellation in the highest heaven; where they shall be your everlasting crown of rejoicing.

But I hasten to the

VI. Thing proposed, which was to show what course ministers of the gospel ought to take, or what things they should do, that they may be burning and shining lights.

And here I shall be just mention things, without enlarging.

And in order to this, ministers should be diligent in their studies, and in the work of the ministry to which they are called; giving themselves wholly to it; taking heed to themselves that their hearts be not engaged, and their minds swallowed up, and their time consumed, in pursuits after the profits and vain glory of the world.

And particularly, ministers should be very conversant with the Holy

Scriptures; making it very much their business, with the utmost diligence and strictness, to search those holy writings. For they are as it were the beams of the light of the Sun of righteousness; they are the light by which ministers must be enlightened, and the light they are to hold forth to their hearers; and they are the fire whence their hearts and the hearts of their hearers must be enkindled.

They should earnestly seek after much of the spiritual knowledge of Christ, and that they may live in the clear views of his glory. For by this means they will be changed into the image of the same glory and brightness, and will come to their people as Moses came down to the congregation of Israel, after he had seen God's back parts in the mount, with his face shining. If the light of Christ's glory shines upon them, it will be the way for them to shine with the same kind of light on their hearers, and to reflect the same beams, which have heat, as well of as brightness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is the treasure the apostle speaks of, that ministers have, as in earthen vessels. 2 Cor. 4:6, 7, "For God, who commanded the light to shined out of darkness, hath shines into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." This was probably typified of old, by the burning lights and lamps which Gideon's soldiers had in one hand in earthen pitchers, while they held a trumpet in the other, with which they sounded (typifying the preaching of the gospel). And thus with the sound of these trumpets, and these burning lights or earthen vessels, they overcame the enemies of God and his people.

Ministers, in order to their being burning and shining lights, should walk closely with God, and keep near to Christ; that they may ever be enlightened and enkindled by him. And they should be much in seeking God, and conversing with him by prayer, who is the fountain of light and love. And knowing their own emptiness and helplessness, [they] should be ever dependent on Christ; being sensible with Jeremiah that they are children, should sit as children at Christ's feet to hear his word, and be instructed by him. And being sensible with Isaiah that they are men of unclean lips, should seek that their lips may be, as it were, touched with a live coal from the altar, as it were by the bright and burning seraphim.

I come now to the

VII. And last things proposed, to say something very briefly concerning the duties of a people that are under the care of a minister, corresponding with these things that Christ has taught us concerning the nature and end of this sacred office. And here I would have a special respect to the people of God in this place, who are about to have the care of their souls committed to him, that is now solemnly to be set apart to the work of the ministry.

If it be, as you have heard, the proper excellency of a minister of the gospel to be a burning and a shining light, then it is your duty earnestly to pray for your minister, that he may be filled with divine light, and with the power of the Holy Ghost, to make him so. For herein you will but pray for the greatest benefit to yourselves. For if your minister burns and shines, it will be for your light and life. That which has been spoken of, as it is the chief excellency of a minister, so it renders a minister the greatest blessing of anything in the world that ever God bestows on a people.

And as it is your duty, to pray that your minister may by this mean become such a blessing to you, so you should do your part to make him so, by supporting him, and putting him under the best advantage, with a mind free from worldly cares, and the pressure of outward wants and difficulties, to give himself wholly to his work. And by all proper acts of respect, and kindness, and assistance, [you are] to encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands. And to take heed that instead of this you do not take a course to obscure and extinguish the light that would shine among you, and to smother and suppress the flame, by casting dirt upon it; by necessitating your minister by your penuriousness towards him, to be involved in worldly care; and by discouraging his heart by disrespect unkindness. And particularly when your minister shows himself to be a burning light, by burning with a proper zeal against any wickedness that may be breaking out amongst his people, and manifests it by bearing a proper testimony against it in the preaching of the word, or by a faithful exercise of the discipline of God's house, instead of taking it thankfully, and yielding to him in it, as you ought, does not raise another fire of a

contrary nature against it. *Viz.* the fire of your unhallowed passions, reflecting upon and reproaching him for his faithfulness. Herein you will act very unbecoming a Christian people, and show yourselves very ungrateful to your minister, and to Christ, who has bestowed upon you so faithful a minister. And will also, while you fight against him, and against Christ, fight most effectually against your own souls. If Christ gives you a minister that is a burning and shining light, take heed that you do not hate the light, because your deeds are reproved by it. But love and rejoice in his light; and that not only for a season, like John the Baptist's apostatizing hearers; and come to the light. Let your frequent resort be to your minister for instruction in soul cases, and under all spiritual difficulties. And be open to the light and willing to receive it. And be obedient to it. And thus walk as the children of light, and follow your minister wherein he is a follower of Christ, *i.e.* wherein he is as a burning and shining light. If you continue so to do, your path will be the path of the just, which shines more and more to the perfect day, and the end of your course shall be in those blissful regions of everlasting light above, where you shall shine forth with your minister, and both with Christ, *as the sun, in the kingdom of the heavenly Father*.

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We Have Peace with God

"... we have peace with God." -- Romans 5:1

1. The nature of it.

2. How it is brought to pass.

3. The distinguishing marks of it.

4. The benefits of it.

5. The course that should be taken in order to it.

I. The nature of it.

Here I would observe that we ought to distinguish between that peace which is real and [which is] sensible.

The one consists in the state of the soul: the other in the sense of the soul. The one is the foundation of the other. That peace of God which is real or that consists in the state of the soul is the ground of that which consists in its sensation or apprehension. Both are called in Scripture by the name of PEACE; and are represented as the peculiar privileges of God's saints. And therefore I will something very briefly consider the nature of each.

1. That peace with God that is *real* is that state of a believer whereby he is in reconciliation and favor with his creator. It consists in two thing: —

1. Something negative — *viz.*, the removal of God's anger and displeasure... forgiveness of sin... total (Isa. 1:18) — 'White as snow,'... compared to the unrolling of a cloud (Isa. 44:22, 23);... as though they never had been (Jer. 50:20); 'sought for and shall not be found,'... 'depths of the sea,' (Mic. 7:18);... everlasting (Jer. 31:34); "make an end of sin." (Dan. 9:24).

2. Something positive — *viz.*, as being received and treated as the objects of God's favor.

As the expression is used in Scripture [it is] something more than merely negative... Title. Manifestation. Treatment.

Difference between love and favor, though sometimes called by the same names — Acceptance. Compliance . . . as entitled to a reward.

2. [That peace with God that is] *sensible* is that inward, holy calm and quietness of soul arising from a sense and apprehension of the soul's union with God.

A sense of this gives an inexpressibly sweet calm. This is usually intended by Christ. (John 14:27).

This is twofold: —

1. Peace of conscience or a sweet calm from a sense of the pardon of sin and acceptance with God as righteous.

Two things —

A sense of sufficiency.

An apprehension of the faithfulness of the promise.

These things give a sweet rest.

2. That rest of soul that arises from the sense or feeling of a real conformity to and union with [Christ].

Peace of confidence consists in a sense of a relative union.

That is the rest that arises from hope: this from love.

II. How the children of God come to be made partakers of this benefit.

1. The first and highest source and spring of all is from God's eternal foreknowledge… Choosing 'em, the particular persons by the Father.

Jer. 31:3 — "Everlasting love."

The love of the Father. Giving them to the Son.

The Son owing them… predestinating of them. (Eph. 1:4).

Titus 1:2

This is the first foundation.

2. The purchase of this blessing was made by the offering that Christ made to the Father.

Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6). Peace on earth... Nigh by the BLOOD. (Eph. 2:14). He is our peace. In the text, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The way. Great High Priest. Offering is but one; but it is to be variously considered.

3. The way in which we come to have an interest in this.

Purchase: and so to be actually brought into peace with God is by being united to Christ.

Threefold union.

Most immediately by a legal union... Real union foundation of legal.

Being in Christ, the believer, as it were, necessarily is a partaker.

4. The immediate efficient of this union is the Holy Spirit.

So Christ is in them, and they in Christ. (Rom. 8:9, 10).

The union is first by a communication from Christ; and this is what is communicated.

The vine is united by deriving sap: the womb by deriving life.

Thus the Holy Spirit makes application. In this respect the peace with God is from the Holy Spirit.

5. The work by which the Spirit works in the elect by which this union is effected is faith.

This is the uniting act. Therefore God looks on the sinner as one with Christ, because He has accepted of him; and his soul has united [itself to Christ].

6. The end of this union, but which the soul has sensible peace with God, is sanctification of heart and life… including faith and all other graces.

And thus it is that the Spirit of God gives sensible peace.

This is the seal of the Spirit (Eph. 1:13); earnest of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 1:22). But this 'tis a spirit of adoption.

III. Distinguishing marks of it, whereby it may be distinguished from the false appearances of it.

1. In those that have a true peace with God their sensible peace has its foundation laid in conviction.

There is a false peace.

Preparation… legal conviction.

Immediate foundation:… Spiritual conviction has its foundation in light, and not in darkness… increased by conviction.

2. In those [that have peace] that quietness and rest of soul they have is not only their comfort but their virtue or nature.(?)

3. Christ is the foundation of all.

4. In those [that have peace there is] a sense of glory and suffering precedes a sense of propriety [property, possession].

A more principal foundation.

5. …a rest of choice and love precedes a rest of hope.

The rest of the faculties of the soul in God is the Church's God…goes before a rest in Him as our God… As a rest in His favor.

6. In those [that have peace] there is a union of heart with God and Christ, attended with an irreconcilable war with God's enemies.

IV. Benefits.

1. A being infinitely above the reach of everything that might make them men…

I say infinitely above… Infinitely strong defense… as impossible as to destroy God Himself… infinite wisdom… infinite strength engaged… infinite price… infinite truth…

Dwell "on high" … infinitely high.

Foundation in that which is eternal: from eternity to eternity…

Oath of God. (Heb. 6:17, 18)…

2. A being at peace with all God's creatures. In different senses.

Angels… Saints… Sun, moon, stars. Beasts. Stones (Job 5:23).

Water and fire (Isa. 43:2). … Whole creation 'groans.'

Poisonous things (Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19). … Wicked men and devils — All things for them (1 Cor. 3:21, 22).

3. Communion with God.

4. An holy and sweet walking and friendly conversing with God. Amos 3:3 — "Two walk together." … "Called you friends."

5. More and more conformity and assimilation to God.

6. Communion with saints (1 John 1:3-7).

7. An irrefragable title to eternal glory.

8. Steadfastness under the changes of life. Anchor to the soul.

A steadfast calm in the midst of storms. A steadfast meekness in the midst of oppositions.

9. A strong and conquering support and comfort under the troubles of life… Waiting our death.

10. Joy unspeakable.

V. Course to be taken in order to the obtaining this peace with God and enjoying the benefit of it.

1. a sense of the great breach…

2. A sense of their misery by reason of the breach, and the absolute necessity of reconciliation. All false rest must be destroyed. The world. Own righteousness.

3. A conviction that God may justly refuse ever to be at peace with us.

4. An eternal divorce of the heart from that which made and which maintains the breach.

5. The Prince of Peace must be resorted to and embraced.

6. An high war must be maintained with God's enemies.

7. A spirit of peace and love must rule in our hearts and lives.

This is the end of union between God and the soul. And this is the end of union between Christians, one with another. If we are much under the influences of a spirit contrary to this, we can't expect to have the sensible peace of God. But it you live in the lively exercise [of this] it will be the way to love.

The feeling of this gives sensible peace, as I observed before.

And it tends to give the other sort of sensible peace, that which consists in

hope. “For perfect peace casts out fear.”

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The Peace Which Christ Gives His True Followers

"Peace I leave with you, my peace give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you." **-- John 14:27**

Subject: That peace which Christ when he died left as a legacy to all his true saints, is very diverse from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children.

These words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with his disciples the same evening in which he was betrayed, knowing that he was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with the 31st verse of the 13th, and is continued to the end of the16th chapter. Christ began his discourse after he partook of the passover with them, after he had instituted and administered the sacrament of the supper, and after Judas was gone out, and none were left but his true and faithful disciples, whom he now addresses as his dear children. This was the last discourse that Christ had with them before his death. As it was his parting discourse, and as it were, his dying discourse, so it is on many accounts the most remarkable we have recorded in our Bibles.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples, and we may suppose that it did so, in a special manner, on the mind of John the beloved disciple, whose heart was especially full of love to him, and who had just then been leaning on his bosom. In this discourse Christ had told his dear disciples that he was going away, which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are given to comfort them, and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which he would leave with them, and which they would have in him and with him, when he was gone.

This promise he delivers in three emphatical expressions which illustrate one another. “Peace I leave with you.” As much as to say, though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort, and you have had

peace in me in the midst of the losses you have sustained, and troubles you have met with from this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you, but leave it with you in a more full possession.

“My peace I give unto you.” Christ by calling it his peace signifies two things,

1. That it was his *own*, that which he had to give. It was the peculiar benefit that he had to bestow on his children, now he was about to leave the world as to his human presence. Silver and gold he had none, for while in his estate of humiliation, he was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head, Luke 9:58. He had no earthly estate to leave to his disciples who were as it were his family, but he had *peace* to give them.

2. It was *his* peace that he gave them, as it was the *same kind* of peace which he himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which he ever had in God, and which he was about to receive in his exalted state in a vastly greater perfection and fullness. For the happiness Christ gives to his people, is a participation of his own happiness: agreeable to chapter 15:11, “These things have I said unto you, that my joy might remain in you.” And in his prayer with his disciples at the conclusion of this discourse, chapter 17:13, “And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” And verse 22, “And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.”

Christ here alludes to men making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont in their last will and testament to give them their estate, that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when he was about to leave the world, with respect to the peace which he gave his disciples. Only with this difference: that earthly parents, when they die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed, yet when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more. The parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ’s peace, he did not only possess it himself before his death, when he bequeathed it to his disciples, but also

afterwards more fully, so that they were received to possess it with him.

The third and last expression is, "*not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" Which is as much as to say my gifts and legacies, now I am going to leave the world, are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs, when they die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions, and it may be vast treasures of silver and gold, and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you is my peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give, and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow, or their children inherit from them.

DOCTRINE

That peace which Christ, when he died, left as a legacy to all his true saints, is very different from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children, when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

II. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this his testament was his peace.

III. This legacy of Christ is exceedingly diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ's last will and testament. Heb. 9:15, 16, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." What men convey by their will or testament is their own estate. So Christ in the New Covenant conveys to believers his own inheritance, so far as they are

capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure, which Christ himself possesses. They live in him, and with him, and by a participation of his life. *Because he lives they live also*. They inherit his kingdom: the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto him, Luke 22:29, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall reign on his throne, Rev. 3:21. They have his glory given to them, John 17. And because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are the saints', 1 Cor. 3:21, 22.

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates their children: so believers are in Scripture represented as Christ's children, Heb. 2:13, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death: so Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to his disciples the blessings of the New Covenant, on the evening before the day of his crucifixion, in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the New Covenant were never so particularly expressed, and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that he was upon earth, as in this discourse. Christ promises them mansions in his Father's house, John 14:1-3. Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name, John 15:7, and chap. 14:23, 24. Here he more solemnly and fully than any where else, gives forth and confirms the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace. John 14:16; chap. 14:26; chap. 15:26; and 16:7. Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favor, John 14:18, and 14:20, 21. Here he promises them *peace,* as in the text. Here he promises them his joy, John 15:11. Here he promises grace to bring forth holy fruits, Chapter 15:16. And victory over the world, John 16:33. And indeed there seems to be no where else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible, as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and his children is like a will or testament also in this respect: that it becomes effectual, and a way is made for putting it in execution, no other way than by his death, as the apostle observes it is with a will or testament among men. "For a testament is of force after men are dead." Heb. 9:17. For though the covenant of grace

indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by his death. So that his death then did virtually intervene, being already undertaken and engaged. As a man's heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them no otherwise than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance no otherwise than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ they never could have obtained it.

II. A great blessing that Christ in his testament has bequeathed to his true followers, is *his peace*. Here are two things that I would observe particularly, *viz.* That Christ has bequeathed to believers true peace, and then that peace he has given them is *his* peace.

First, our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to his followers. Christ is called the Prince of Peace, Isa. 9:6. And when he was born into the world, the angels on that joyful and wonderful occasion sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth *peace*," — because of that peace which he should procure for and bestow on the children of men: peace with God, and peace one with another, and tranquillity and peace within themselves, which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. This Christ has procured for his followers, and laid a foundation for their enjoyment of it, in that he has procured for them the other two, *viz.* peace with God, and one with another. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God, and his favor and friendship, in that he satisfied for their sins and laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to God, and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance, to the adoption of children, and to the eternal fruits of his fatherly kindness.

By these means true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation, and all the curses of the law of God, Rom. 8:34, "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery to which naturally they are exposed, and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them, nor can wicked men, though they may persecute, ever hurt them, Rom. 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Num. 23:8, "How shall I curse whom God hath

not cursed?" Verse 23, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means they are out of the reach of death, John 6:4; chap. 6:50, 51, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means death with respect to them has lost its sting, and is no more worthy of the name of death, 1 Cor. 15:55, "O death, where is thy sting?" By these means they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment, when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved, Psa. 46:1, 2, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed: and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in an assurance, that nothing can separate him from the love of God, Rom. 8:38, 39.

Thus he that is in Christ, is in a safe refuge from everything that might disturb him, Isa. 32:2, "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And hence they that dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to then, which we have in the 18th verse of the same chapter, "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

And the true followers of Christ have not only ground of rest and peace of soul, by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of, living, dying, and through all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness, are built on rock that can never be moved, and have a fountain that is sufficient, and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed his Word and oath, "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah is become their God, who can do everything for them. He is their portion who has an infinite fullness of good in himself. "He is their shield and exceeding great reward." As *great* a good is made over to them as they can desire or conceive of; and is made as *sure* as they can desire. Therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest, and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, he has bequeathed peace to the souls of his people, as he has procured for them and made over to them the spirit of grace and true holiness, which has a natural tendency to the peace and quietness of the soul. It implies a discovery and relish of a suitable and sufficient. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty, and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness, and so it brings the soul to its true center. The soul by his means is brought to rest, and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do: who will show us any good, and wandering to and fro, like lost sheep seeking rest, and finding none. The soul has found him who is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and sits down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto his taste, Song 2:3. And thus that saying of Christ is fulfilled, John 4:14, "Whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles in the soul in the due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost. Grace tends to tranquillity, as it mortifies tumultuous desires and passions, [and] subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation, and [it] supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace, as it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end. So that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn by opposite ends to be sought, and opposite portions to be obtained, and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served. But the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good, and the soul's aim at this, and hope of it, is like an anchor that keeps it stedfast, that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

Third, this peace which Christ has left as a legacy to his true followers, is his peace. It is the peace which himself enjoys. This is what I take to be principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that he enjoyed while on the earth, in his state of humiliation. Though he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted grief, and was everywhere hated and persecuted by men and devils, and had no place of rest in this world, yet in God, his

Father, he had peace. We read of his rejoicing in spirit, Luke 10:21. So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished his labors and sufferings, had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, he entered into his rest, a state of most blessed, perfect, and everlasting peace: delivered by his own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on his resurrection. Having obtained a perfect victory over his enemies, he was received of his Father into heaven, the rest which he had prepared for him, there to enjoy his heart's desire fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the six first verses of the 21st Psalm, which have respect to Christ, fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is exceeding glorious, Isa. 11:10, "And his rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured, not only for himself, but also his people, by his death. He has bequeathed it to them that they may enjoy it with him, imperfectly in this, and perfectly and eternally in another world.

That peace, which has been described, and which believers enjoy, is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood by which Christ himself has entered into rest. It is in a participation of this same justification, for believers are justified with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead, and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him, as being accepted of God in the same righteousness. It is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that the enjoy peace. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." It is in a participation of the same Spirit, for believers have the Spirit of Christ. He had the Spirit given to him not by measure, and of his fullness do they all receive, and grace for grace. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron went down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit poured on Christ, the Head, descends to all his members. It is as partaking of the same grace of the Spirit that believers enjoy this peace, John 1:16.

It is as being united to Christ, and living by a participation of his life, as a branch lives by the 1ife of the vine. It is as partaking of the same love of God, John 17:26, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in

them." — It is as having a part with him in his victory over the same enemies, and also as having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest and peace, Eph. 2:5, 6, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, — and hath raised us up together. and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

III. This legacy of Christ to his true disciples is very diverse from all that the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die. The men of this world, many of them, when they come to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies and from every side of the globe of the earth. They leave them wherewith to live in much state and magnificence, and make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, scepters, and palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which he has bequeathed to his true followers. These things are such as God commonly, in his providence, gives his worst enemies, those whom he hates and despises most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit, which he reserves for his peculiar favorites. These worldly things, even the best of them, that the men and princes of the world leave for their children, are things which God in his providence throws out to those whom he looks on as dogs. But Christ's peace is the bread of his children. All these earthly things are but empty shadows, which however men set their hearts upon them, are not bread, and can never satisfy their souls. But this peace of Christ is a truly substantial, satisfying food, Isa. 55:2. None of those things if men have them to the best advantage, and in ever so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience: it being found in all ages, that those who have the most of them, have commonly the least quietness of mind. It is true, there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace they may have in their enjoyment of worldly things. Men may bless their souls, and think themselves the only happy persons and despise others, [and] may say to their souls, as the rich man did, Luke 12:19, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many

years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But Christ's peace, which he gives to his true disciples, vastly differs from this peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world, in the following respects:

First, Christ's peace is a reasonable peace and rest of soul. It is what has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things, whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have, arises from their having their eyes open, and seeing things as they be. The more they consider, and the more they know of the truth and reality of things — the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in, the more they know of God, and the more certain they are that there is a God. The more they know what manner of being he is, the more certain they are of another world and future judgment and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises, the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened and the brighter and the more searching the light is that they see things in, — the more is their peace established. Whereas, on the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist no otherwise than by their being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace. Do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them and see what they are, and what circumstances they are in, and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live nowhere but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves, the more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess. The more they are sensible what things now are, and what things are like to be hereafter, the more will their calm be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think, and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort. If he would establish his carnal peace, it concerns him to put out the light of his mind, and turn beast as fast as he can. The faculty of reason, if at liberty, proves a mortal enemy to his peace. It concerns him, if he would keep alive his peace, to contrive all ways that may be, to stupefy his mind and deceive himself, and to imagine things to be otherwise than they be. But with respect to

the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the firmer is their comfort, and the higher their joy. How vast a difference is there between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable are they who cannot enjoy peace any otherwise than by hiding their eyes from the light, and confining themselves to darkness. Their peace is stupidity. It is as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupefying poison, and the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in a house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though a miserable wretch confined in bedlam. Whereas, the peace which Christ gives his true disciples, is the light of life, something of the tranquillity of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise, that has the glory of God to lighten it.

Second, Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace. The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious. It is a vile stupidity, that depraves and debases the mind, and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ, is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian tranquillity, rest, and joy of real saints, are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit, wherein the image of God in them does partly consist. This peace has its source in those principles that are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meekness, and charity. The exercise of such blessed fruits of the Spirit as are spoken of, Gal. 5:22, 23.

Third, this peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world, with regard to its exquisite sweetness. It is a peace so much above all that natural men enjoy in worldly things, that it surpasses their understanding and conception, Phil. 4:7. It is exquisitely sweet and secure, because it has so firm a foundation, the everlasting rock that never can be moved; because [it is] perfectly agreeable to reason; because it rises from holy and divine principles that as they are the virtue, so they are the proper happiness of men; and because the greatness of the objective good that the saints enjoy is no other than the infinite bounty and fullness of that God who is the fountain of all good. The fullness and

perfection of that provision that is made for it in Christ and the new covenant, is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace, and this hereafter they shall actually enjoy. And though their peace is not now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but to their own imperfection, sin and darkness. As yet, they do partly cleave to the world, and seek peace from thence, and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision there made, and accept of it, and cleave to that alone, the nearer are they brought to perfect tranquillity, Isa. 25:5.

Fourth, the peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling, in that it is unfailing and eternal peace. That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world, is according to the foundation upon which it is built, of short continuance like the comfort of a dream, 1 John 2:17; 1 Cor. 7:31. These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water. They vanish in a moment, Hos. 10:7. — But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting. It is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies. It will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

APPLICATION

The use that I would make of this doctrine, is to improve it as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow him. Happiness and rest are what all men pursue. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it. They are laboring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to him, and offers you this peace which he gives his true followers, that so much excels all that the world can afford, Isa. 55:2, 3.

You that have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction in the profit and glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth, have this day an offer of that excellent and everlasting peace and

blessedness, which Christ has purchased with the price of his own blood. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ, and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort, but will be like the prodigal, that in vain endeavored to be satisfied with the husks that the swine did eat. The wrath of God will abide upon, and misery will attend you, wherever you go, which you never will be able to escape. Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace, while they continue in their sins, Isa. 57:19-21. There is no peace between God and them. For as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under its dominion, so God's indignation continually burns against them, and therefore there is reason why they should travail in pain all their days. While you continue in such a state, you live in a state of dreadful uncertainty what will become of you, and in continual danger. When you are in the enjoyment of things most pleasing to you, where your heart is best suited, and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation. You hang over the infernal pit, with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can anyone enjoy in such a state as this? What though you clothe him in gorgeous apparel, or to set him on a throne, or at a prince's table, and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords? How miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have! What a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment, while they are the prisoners of divine justice, and wretched captives of the devil! They have none to befriend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world!

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace: comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety, and on a sure foundation: a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason, and with your eyes open. You may have all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as in the depths of the sea, that they may never be found more. And being

not only forgiven, but accepted to favor, you become the objects of God's complacence and delight. Being taken into God's family and made his children, you may have good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure, wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fades not away. Being in such circumstances, nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity, having for the foundation of your hope that love of God which is from eternity to eternity, and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power: things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity be defended from all storms, and dwell above the floods, Psa. 32:6, 7. And you shall be at peace with everything, and God will make all his creatures throughout all parts of his dominion, to befriend you, Job 5:19-24. You need not be afraid of anything that your enemies can do unto you, Psa. 3:5, 6. Those things that now are most terrible to you, *viz.* death, judgment, and eternity, will then be most comfortable, the most sweet and pleasant objects of your contemplation. At least there will be reason that they should be so. Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day. Turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live, forsake those things which are no other than the devil's baits, and seek after this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ: that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Taste and see: never was any disappointed that made a trial. Pro. 24:13, 14. You will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day. The issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and never be interrupted nor have an end.

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Procrastination

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." **-- Proverbs 27:1**

Subject: We ought to behave ourselves every day as though we had not dependence on any other day.

The design of the wise man in this book of Proverbs, is to give us the precepts of true wisdom, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves wisely in the course of our lives. Wisdom very much consists in making a wise improvement of time, and of the opportunities we enjoy. This is often in Scripture spoken of as a great part of true wisdom; as Deu. 32:29, “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” And Psa. 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” So the wisdom of the wise virgins is represented as consisting much in this, that they improved the proper season to buy oil.

Therefore the wise man in these books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, agreeably to his design, insists on this part of wisdom. He tells us the advantage of seeking Christ early; Pro. 8:17. And advises us “to do what our hand findeth to do, with our might;” Ecc. 9:10. He advises young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, in which they shall say they have no pleasure; Ecc. 12:1. So here he advises us to a wise improvement of the present season. — In the words are two things to be particularly observed.

1. The precept, *not to boast of tomorrow; i.e.* not to speak or act as

though it were our own. It is absurd for men to boast of that which is not theirs. The wise man would not have us behave ourselves as though any time were ours but the present. He that boasts of tomorrow, acts as though he had tomorrow in his possession, or had something whereby he might depend on it, and call it his own.

2. The reason given for this precept; *for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*. It is a good reason why we should not behave ourselves as though the morrow were our own, that indeed it is not; we are not sure of it; we have no hold of future time; we know not whether we shall see the morrow. Or if we do know that we shall see it, we know not what we shall see on it. — Hence, we ought to behave ourselves every day, as though we had no dependence on any other.

SECTION I

Needful precautions.

To prevent a misunderstanding of the doctrine, I observe that it is not meant, that we should in every respect behave as though we knew that we should not live another day. Not depending on another day, is a different thing, from concluding, that we shall not live another day. We may have reason for the one, and not for the other. We have good reason to depend on another day, but we have no reason to conclude, that we shall not live another day.

In some respects we ought to carry ourselves, as though we know we should not live another day, and should improve every day as if it were the last. Particularly, we should live every day as conscientiously and as holily as if we knew it were the last. We should be as careful every day to avoid all sin, as if we knew that that night our souls should be required of us. We should be as careful to do every duty which God requires of us, and take as much care that we have a good account to give to our Judge, of our improvement of that day, as if we concluded that we must be called to give an account before another day.

But in many other respects, we are not obliged to behave ourselves as though we concluded that we should not live to another day. If we had

reason to conclude that we should not live another day, some things would not be our duty which now are our duty. As for instance, in such a case it would not be the duty of any person to make provision for his temporal subsistence during another day. To neglect which, as things now are, would be very imprudent and foolish, as the consequences would show, if every man were to act in this manner. If so, it would never be man's duty to plow or sow the field, or to lay up for winter; but these things are man's duty; as Pro. 6:6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And chap. 10:5, etc. "He that gathereth in the summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame." And many other places might be mentioned.

So, on the other hand, if we were certain that we should not live another day, some things would be our duty today, which now are not so. As for instance, it would be proper for us to spend our time in giving our dying counsels, and in setting our houses in order. If it were revealed to us, that we should die before tomorrow morning, we ought to look upon it as a call of God to us, to spend the short remainder of our lives in those things which immediately concern our departure, more than otherwise it would be our duty to do. — Therefore, the words which forbid us to boast of tomorrow, cannot be extended so far as to signify, that we ought *in all respects* to live, as if we knew we should not see another day. Yet they undoubtedly mean, that we ought not to behave ourselves in any respect, as though we *depended* on another day.

SECTION II

The precept explained.

Boast not thyself of tomorrow. In this precept two things seem to be forbidden.

First, boasting ourselves of what shall be on the morrow, or behaving ourselves as though we depended on particular things to come to pass in this world, in some future time. As when men behave themselves, as though they depended on being rich, or promoted to honor hereafter; or

as though they were sure of accomplishing any particular design another day. So did the rich man in the gospel, when he did not only promise himself, that he should live many years, but promised himself also, that he should be rich many years. Hence he said to his soul, that *he had much goods laid up for many years*.

And if men act as though they depended upon it, that they should another day accomplish such and such things for their souls, then may they be said to boast themselves of tomorrow, and not to behave themselves as though they depended on no other day. As when they behave themselves, as though they depended upon it, that they should at another day have such and such advantages for the good of their souls; that they should at another day have the strivings of God's Spirit; that they should at another day find themselves disposed to be thorough in seeking their salvation; that they should at another day have a more convenient season; and that God at another day would stand ready to hear their prayers, and show them mercy.

Or if they act as though they depended upon it that they should have considerable opportunity on a deathbed to seek mercy; or whatever they promise themselves should come to pass respecting them in this world, if they act as depending on it, they boast themselves of tomorrow.

Second, another thing implied, is our boasting of future time itself, or acting as though we depended on it, that we should have our lives continued to us another day. Not only is the command of God delivered in the text transgressed by those who behave themselves as depending upon it, that they shall see and obtain such and such things tomorrow; but by those who act as depending upon it, that they shall remain in being in this world tomorrow.

Both these ways of boasting of tomorrow are reproved by the apostle James, chap. 4:13, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." By promising themselves that they shall do such and such things, and that they shall get gain, they boast themselves of what shall come to pass in such a time. The apostle in the next verse teaches them, that they ought not to do this, no nor so much as depend upon seeing another day,

or on having their lives continued, verse 14, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” And in verse 15 he teaches us that both are uncertain and dependent on the will of God, *viz.* Whether we shall live another day, and if we do, whether such and such things shall come to pass? “For that you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.” Therefore he add in verse 16, “But now you rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.”

SECTION III

When men act as though they depend on another day.

First, they will do so, if they *set their hearts* on the enjoyments of his life. I mean not, if they have any manner of affection to them. We may have some affection to the enjoyments of this world; otherwise they would cease to be enjoyments. If we might have no degree of rejoicing in them, we would not be thankful for them. Persons may in a degree take delight in earthly friends, and other earthly enjoyments. It is agreeable to the wise man’s advice that we should do so. Ecc. 5:18, “It is good and comely for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all this labour that he taketh under the sun.” — But by setting our hearts on these things, by placing our happiness on them, and letting out the current of our affections after them — by turning and fixing our inclinations so much upon them, that we cannot well enjoy ourselves without them, so that very much of the strength of the faculties of our minds is employed and taken up about these things — we show that we have our dependence on another day.

The man who doth, thus acts as though he depended on another day, yea many other days, in the world. For it is most evident, that if the enjoyments of this world be of such a nature that they are not to be depended on for one day more, they are not worth the setting of our hearts upon them, or the placing of our happiness in them. We may rejoice in the enjoyments of the world, but not in such a manner as to place the rest of our souls in them. As the apostle saith, we should rejoice in them as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. 7:30. So that if the joy should fail, our stock may hold good. And in this case we must behave ourselves

only as if we had lost a small stream of joy, but still had the fountain in full possession. We should conduct ourselves as those who have not the fountain of their joy shaken, though some appurtenances have failed. Our happiness as to *the body* of it, if I may so speak, should yet stand as on an immovable foundation.

They who are very much pleased and elated with the enjoyments of the world, certainly behave themselves as though they had much dependence on their continuance for more than one or two days more. — They who addict themselves to vain mirth, and lead a jovial life, show that they set their hearts on the enjoyments of the world, and act as those who depend on more days than the present. For if they were sensible, they could not depend on any future time, but that death would put an eternal end to all their carnal mirth before tomorrow, they would have no heart to spend the present day in such a manner as they now do. It would immediately produce in them a disposition far from levity and vanity.

And when persons are very much sunk with the loss of any temporal enjoyments, or with any temporal disappointments, it shows that they set their hearts upon them, and behave as though they boasted of tomorrow, and depended upon their long continuance of life. If they had no such dependence, they would not be overwhelmed by their frustration. If they be very much sunk, and the comfort of their lives destroyed by it, it shows that those temporal enjoyments were too much the foundation on which their comfort stood. That which makes a building totter, and threatens its destruction, is not the taking away of some of the exterior parts of the superstructure, but the removal of some considerable part of the foundation on which the house stands.

Second, if men are proud of their worldly circumstances, it shows that they have a dependence on tomorrow; for no man would think it worth his while to vaunt himself in that which is to be depended on only for a day. Though a man have a great estate today, he will not be puffed up with it, unless he depend upon having it tomorrow. A man who hath no dependence, but that he may tomorrow may be in the grave, where the small and great are upon a level, Job 3:19. Will not be much lifted up with his advancement to a post of honor. That person will not be proud of his rich and fine clothes, who is sensible that he may be stripped by death

tomorrow, and sent out of the world, as he came naked into it. He will not today be very proud of his personal beauty, who hath no dependence on escaping tomorrow that stroke of death which will mar all his beauty, and make that face which he now thinks so comely, appear ghastly and horrid; when instead of a ruddy and florid countenance, there will be the blood settled, cold and congealed, the flesh stiff and clayey, the teeth set, the eyes fixed and sunk into the head. Nor will he today very much affect to beautify and adorn with gaudy and flaunting apparel, that body concerning which he is sensible that it may be wrapped in a winding sheet tomorrow, to be carried to the grave, there to rot, and be covered and filled with worms.

Third, when men envy others their worldly enjoyments, their wealth, their worldly ease, or their titles and high places — their sensual pleasures, or any of their worldly circumstances — it shows, that they set their hearts on the things of the world; and that they are not sensible that these things are not to be depended upon for another day. If they were, they would not think them worth their envy. They would appear so worthless in their eyes, that they would not care who had them, nor who went without them. — So when they contend about worldly possessions and enjoyments (as almost all the contentions that are in the world are about these things), it shows that they have dependence on tomorrow. Otherwise they would not think the enjoyments of the world worth contending about. They would be very much of the temper recommended by Jesus Christ. Mat. 5:40, "He that will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

Fourth, men behave themselves as if they depended on another day, when they rest at ease today, in a condition out of which they must be delivered before they die. When a man's mind is at rest, there is something that he rests in. It must have some foundation, either real or imaginary. But if the man be in a condition from which he is sensible he must some time or other be delivered, or be undone, it is impossible that he should rest in the thoughts of remaining in his condition always, and never being delivered from it. For no man is willing to be ruined. No man can rest in that which he conceives to be connected with his own misery and undoing. — Therefore, if he rest in such a condition for the present, it

must be on a supposition, that he shall be delivered from it. If he rest in it today, it must be because he depends on being delivered *another* day, and therefore depends on seeing another day.

We in this land generally profess, that as we are by sinful nature, we are exposed to eternal death, and that therefore there is a necessity that we get out of a natural condition some time before we die. And those among us who are sensible that they have never passed through any such change as in Scripture is called a *being born again,* though they be not sufficiently convinced that there is any such place as hell, yet have a kind of belief in it; at least they do not conclude that there is no such place, and therefore cannot but be sensible that it would be dreadful to die unconverted. Therefore, if they be in a considerable degree of ease and quietness in their condition, it must be because they have a dependence on being delivered out of such a condition some time before they die.

Inasmuch as they are easy, remaining in such a condition today, without any prospect of present deliverance, it shows plainly that they depend on another day. If they did not, they could have no quietness in their spirits; because, if there be no grounds of dependence on any further opportunity, then what they are exposed to, by missing the opportunity which they have today, is infinitely dreadful. — Persons who are secure in their sins, under the light of the gospel, unless they be deceived with a false hope, are generally so because they boast themselves of tomorrow. They depend on future opportunity; they flatter themselves with hopes of living long in the world; they depend on what shall come to pass hereafter; they depend on the fulfillment of their good intentions as to what they will do at a more convenient season.

Fifth, men behave themselves as those who depend on another day, when they neglect anything today which must be done before they die. If there be anything, which is absolutely necessary to be done sometime before death, and the necessity of it be sufficiently declared and shown to the person for whom it is thus necessary, if he neglects setting about it immediately, sincerely, and with all his might, certainly it carries this face with it, that the man depends upon its being done hereafter, and consequently that he shall have opportunity to do it. — Because, as to those things which are absolutely necessary to be done, there is need, not

only of a possibility of a future opportunity; but of something which is to be depended on, some good ground to conclude that we shall have future opportunity. Therefore, whoever lives under this gospel, and does not this day thoroughly reform his life, by casting away every abomination, and denying every lust — and doth not apply himself to the practice of the whole of his duty towards God and man, and begin to make religion his main business — he acts as one who depends on another day; because he is abundantly taught that these things must be done before he dies.

Those who have been seeking salvation for a great while, in a dull, insincere, and slightly manner, and find no good effect of it, have abundant reason to conclude, that some time before they die, they must not only seek, but strive to enter in at the strait gate, and must be violent for the kingdom of heaven. And therefore, if they do not begin thus today, they act as those who depend on another day. — So those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of some particular known duty, whether it be secret prayer, or paying some old debt, which they have long owed to their neighbor — or the duty of confessing some fault to a brother who hath aught against them, or of making restitution for some injury — they act as those who depend on another day.

Sixth, men behave themselves as though they depended on another day, if they do that today which some time or other must be undone. There are many things done by men which must be undone by them. They must go back again from the way which they have gone, or they are ruined to all eternity. Therefore, in doing these things, they act as those who depend on future opportunity to undo them. As when a man cheats or defrauds his neighbor in anything, he acts as one that boasts of tomorrow. For he must undo what he doth before he dies; he must some time or other make restitution, or divine justice, which oversees all things, and governs the whole world, and will see to it that right be done, will not let go its hold of him.

So when men hearken to temptation, and yield to the solicitations of their lusts to commit any sin they act as those who depend on another day. They do what must be undone. What they then do must be undone by hearty and thorough repentance, or they are ruined and lost forever. So if persons have been seeking salvation for a time, and afterwards are guilty

of backsliding, and turn back after their hands have been put to the plow, they act as those who depend on another day. For what they now do, they must undo some time or other. They must go back again from their backsliding, and have all their work to do over again. And these things must be undone in this world, while men live; for there will be no undoing of them afterwards; they may be suffered for, but never can be undone.

SECTION IV

Why we ought not to boast of tomorrow.

I come now to show, why we ought not thus to boast ourselves of tomorrow; but on the contrary, to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on another. And there is this plain and sufficient REASON for it, *viz.* that we have no grounds of dependence on another day. We have neither any foundation to depend upon seeing any particular things come to pass another day, which we may hope or wish for, nor upon enjoying another day in this world. We have nothing for a foundation of dependence that we shall not be in eternity before tomorrow, as both reason and experience show. — We have no promise of God that we shall ever see another day. We are in God's hands; our lives are in his hands; he hath set out bounds; the number of our months and days are with him; nor hath he told them to us. We see that the life of man at longest is very short, and nothing is more uncertain. And it is a thing universal among mankind, that they know not the day of their death. We see that great natural abilities, and sharpness of wit, and clearness of discernment, do not help to any discovery in this matter. Wise men are as uncertain of the term of their lives as others.

There are so many ways and means whereby the lives of men come to an end, that no circumstances in which a man can be are any security to him from death. That it is but a very little while till tomorrow, is no good ground of dependence that we shall live till then. We see that deaths as sudden as our dying before tomorrow morning, are common in the world. We very often see or hear of sudden deaths. How many suddenly, in a few minutes, pass from a state of health to a state of death, in the daytime, by several kinds of disease, which give no warning of their approach, and by

many unforeseen accidents! How many go to sleep in health, and are found dead in their beds in the morning! So that our present health is no good ground of dependence that we shall live to see another day. — That persons are now in youth is no good ground of dependence upon another day; for sudden unexpected deaths are common even among those who are in the bloom of youth. Nor is it any ground of dependence in this case, that a man is of a more than ordinary healthy and strong constitution. It is found by experience, that such are liable to sudden death as well as others. Job 21:23, “One dieth in his full strength. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.”

That persons have already lived to see a great many days, and that after they had been often in times past, told that they were uncertain of any future time. Or that persons have a strong desire to live longer; or that they are now very unprepared for death, both on temporal and spiritual accounts; is no ground of dependence on the future. Death tarries for no man, but comes when and to whom he is sent, and strikes the deadly blow, whether the man be prepared or not. That men have been very useful in their day, and that it is of great importance to their families and neighbors that they should live longer, is no ground of dependence. The most useful men are often cut down by death, in the midst of their usefulness. The same may be said, though we cannot see which way death should come at us before tomorrow. To how many accidents, to how many diseases, are we liable, which may prove fatal before tomorrow, which yet it is impossible for us to foresee! So, if we be very careful of our lives, and our health, not to expose ourselves to any dangers, still this is no ground of dependence as to any future time. Death comes in many ways which were not thought of. Men foresee not the means of their death, any more than the fish securely swimming in the water foresee the net, or the bird that securely feeds upon the bait sees the snare. It is as the wise man observes, in Ecc. 9:12, “For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”

SECTION V

Serious inquiries.

I shall improve this doctrine, by putting you upon examining yourselves, whether you do not boast yourselves of tomorrow, or whether you do not live in such a manner as you would not, were it not that you depend on future time and future opportunity in the world. Would not your behavior be very different from what it now is, if you every day lived and acted without any dependence on seeing one day more? — You cannot but acknowledge it to be most reasonable, that you should live and act thus. You cannot but own, that you have no good ground of dependence on another day; and therefore that you cannot act wisely any otherwise than in acting as one who hath no dependence on any such thing. Therefore inquire whether you act wisely and reasonably in this respect.

First, do you not set your hearts much more on this world, than you would, if you had no dependence on the morrow? Is not the language of the rich man in the gospel, the secret language of your hearts? "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," etc. Is not this the language of your hearts, with respect to what you have gotten already; which makes you place your happiness so much in it? And with respect to what of the world you are seeking and pursuing, is it not with a dependence on enjoying it for a great while, when you shall have obtained it? Are not your lands and other possessions which you have gotten, or are about to get, in your own imagination, yours for a great while? — Would your mind be so filled with thoughts and cares about these things, so much to the exclusion of another world. Would you lay yourselves under so great disadvantages for your soul's good, by involving yourselves in worldly cares, if you had no dependence on having anything to do with these things for more than the present day? If you did not depend on considerably more time in the world, would your inquiry be so much, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? And so little, How shall we make our calling and election sure? How shall we be assured that we are upon a good foundation for another world, and that we are in such a state, that death cannot hurt us? How shall we be sure that we are ready to appear before the judgment-seat of a heart-searching God? — Would there be so much of your time spent in laying up treasure on earth — and so little in laying up treasure in heaven, that you might have store against the day of death — were it not that you

put death at a distance? Would you be so much raised at your temporal prosperity, and so much sunk when you meet with crosses and disappointments in your worldly affairs, if you did not think that continuance in the world is to be depended on for more days than the present? — Let those who very much affect to adorn their bodies in gaudy apparel, inquire whether they would think it worth their while to spend so much time to make themselves fine, and to set themselves forth as gayer than others, if they really had no dependence that their bodies would be preserved one day longer from being clasped in the cold arms of death?

Second, inquire, whether you would not much less meddle with the concerns of others, and be much more employed with your own hearts, if each day you had no dependence on living another day. If you were sensible that you had had no other day to depend upon than this, you would be sensible that you had great affairs of your own to attend to. You would find a great deal of business at home between God and your own soul. And considering that you cannot depend upon another day, it would seem to you that you have but a short time in which to do it, and that therefore you have need to be much engaged. You would find so much to be done, and so much difficulty in doing it, that you would have little leisure, and little heart, to intermeddle with the business of others. Your business would be confined to a much narrower compass. You would have so much to do at home in your closets, and with your own hearts, that you would find no occasion to go abroad for intermeddling business to fill up your time.

But the truth is, men conceive a great deal of time which they have to be filled up, and hence they want business. They depend on tomorrow, and the day following, and next month, and next year, yea many years to come. When they are young they depend on living to be middle-aged, and when middle-aged they depend on old age, and always put far away the day of death. Let them be young or old, there always seems to them to be a great vacancy between them and death. Hence they wander to and fro for business to fill up that vacancy. — Whereas if they were sensible of the uncertainty of life, they would, in the first place, make sure of their own business. The business of their own precious, immortal souls would be

done, before they would attend much to the business of other people. They would have no desire or disposition to concern themselves with every private quarrel which breaks out in the neighborhood. They would not think it much concerned them to inquire into the matter, and to pass their censure on the affair. They would find something else to do, than to sit by the hour together, discussing and censuring the conduct of such and such persons, gathering up or rehearsing the stories which are carried about to the disadvantage of this and that person.

We seldom, if ever, see men who are upon sickbeds, and look upon themselves very dangerously sick, disposed to spend their time in this manner. And the reason is, that they look upon it doubtful whether they shall live long. They do not, so much as others, depend on much time to spare. Hence their minds are taken up more about their own souls' concerns, than about the concerns of others. So it would be with persons in health, if their health did not make them depend on a great deal of time in the world.

Third, if you each day depend on no other than but the present, would you not engage and interest yourselves much less in party designs and schemes, than you are now wont to do? Among a people divided into two parties, as this town hath been for a long time, there is commonly much done by the partisans in forming schemes of opposition to one another. There is always a strife, who shall get their wills and carry their point. This often engages them, if not in open quarrels, in secret intrigues. That there is so much done in these things, is a certain evidence that they boast themselves of tomorrow, and put death at a distance.

Men would certainly find themselves very much indisposed to such things, if they were so sensible of the uncertainty of life, as to depend on no other day than the present. It is therefore very proper, that you should examine yourselves in this particular, at this time. If you really depended on no other day than the present, would your hearts be so much engaged in strife between two parties, as they often are? Would your spirits be so often raised and ruffled? Would you go about with so much prejudice against such and such men; harboring so much of the old leaven, which so often breaks out in heats of spirit; and, as an old sore which was skinned over, but not cured, set to raging with a touch which would not

have hurt sound flesh? — Commonly in the management of a strife between two parties, there is a great deal of envy. When any who belong to one of the parties seem to prosper, the other party will envy them; it is a grievous thing to them. So there is also much contempt. When one of the parties gets the ascendant a little over the other, they are ready to make the utmost improvement of it, and to insult the other party. — And there is commonly in such cases a great deal of mutual secret reproach. When those of one party get together, then is the time to inveigh against those of the other party, and to set forth their injustice and their fraudulent practices. Then is the time for them to pass their censure on their words and actions. Then is the time to expose their own surmises and suspicions of what the other party intends, what it aims at in such and such things, what the purposes of individuals are, and what they suppose their secret actions are. — Then is the time for all that are friends in the cause, and engaged in the same designs, to entertain one another by ridiculing the words and actions of the other party, and to make themselves sport of their folly and disappointments; and much is done at calling one another *Raca* and *fools,* or other names equivalent, if not much more than equivalent. Then is the time to lay their heads together, to plot and contrive how they shall manage such an affair so as to disappoint the other party, and obtain their own wills.

Brethren, these things ought not so to be among a Christian people; especially among a people that has made the profession which we have made. Nor would they be so if it were not for your dependence on much future time in the world. If you were so sensible of your continual liableness to death, that every day was the last you depended upon, these things certainly would not be so. For let us but consider what are the effects of death with respect to such things. It puts an end to party-quarrels. Many men hold these quarrels as long as they live. They begin young, and hold on through many great and sore afflictions and chastisements of Providence. The old sore remains, when the supporters of nature bow, and the eyes grow dim, and the hands tremble with age. But death, when that comes, puts an end to all their quarreling in this world. Death silences the most clamorous, and censorious, and backbiting tongue. When men are dead, they cease to lay schemes against those of another party. Death dashes all their schemes, so far as they have

any concern in them. Psa. 146:4, “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

When men are dead, they cease to bite and devour others; as it is said to have been of old a proverb among the Egyptians, *Dead men do not bite.* There are many who will bite and devour as long as they live, but death tames them. Men could not be quiet or safe by them while alive, but none will be afraid of them when dead. The bodies of those that made such a noise and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quietly among the graves of their neighbors as any others. Their enemies, of whom they strove to get their wills while alive, get their wills of them when they are dead. Nothing can please their enemies better than to have them out of their way. It suits them, that those who were so troublesome to them, are locked up safe in the close grave, where they will no more stand in their way. — There are no more effects of their pride, their craftiness, their hatred and envy. Ecc. 9:6, “Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished.”

The time will soon come, when you who have for many years been at times warmly contending one with another, will be very peaceable as to this world. Your dead bodies will probably lie quietly together in the same burying place. If you do not leave off contending before death, how natural will it be for others to have such thoughts as these, when they see your corpses; What! Is this the man who used to be so busy in carrying on the designs of his party? Oh, now he has done. Now he hath no more any part in any of these things. Now it doth not at all concern him, who get their wills, or what party is uppermost. We shall hear his voice no more in our *town meetings*. He will not sit any more to reproach and laugh at others. He is gone to appear before his Judge, and to receive according to his conduct in life. — The consideration of such things as these would certainly have a mighty effect among us, if we did not put far away the day of death. If all acted every day as not depending on any other day, we should be a peaceful, quiet people.

Fourth, inquire, whether or no you do not allow yourselves in some things, and endeavor to flatter yourselves that there is no evil in them which you would by no means dare to do if you had not a dependence on living till tomorrow. It is very common among men, when they are

strongly enticed to some sinful practice, by their worldly interest, or by their carnal appetites, to pretend that they do not think there is any evil in it; when indeed they know better. Their pretense is only to serve a present turn. And if they expected to have their souls required of them that night, they would by no means dare to persist in the practice. — Therefore examine the liberties you take by this test. What would you think of them, if you now should have the following news sent you by some messenger from heaven; John, or Thomas (or whatever your name be), this night shall thy soul be required of thee. How would such tidings strike you! How would they alter the face of things! Doubtless your thoughts would be very quick; you would soon begin to reflect on yourselves, and to examine your past and present conduct. And in what colors would the liberties you now take, appear to you in the case now supposed? Would you then conclude, that there is no evil in them? Would you not be less bold to go forward and meet death, for having continued in such practices? Would you dare to commit such acts again before you die, which now you pretend are lawful? Would not the few hours which you would have to live, be at all the more uncomfortable to you for having done such things? Would you not presently wish that you had let them alone? Yea, would they not appear frightful and terrifying to you? If it be thus, it is a sign that the reason why you now allow yourselves in them, and plead for their lawfulness, is that you put death at a distance, and depend on many other days in the world.

Fifth, inquire, whether you do not some things on the presumption, that you shall hereafter repent of them. Is not this the very thing which causes you to dare to do some things? Is it not the very ground on which you venture to gratify your lusts? Let young people examine all their secret carriage; what they do alone in the dark and in secret corners. God knoweth, and your own hearts know, though men do not. Put the question impartially to your own consciences; is not this the very thing that gives you courage, that God is very merciful, and that he often of his sovereign mercy gives repentance of great sins, and even willful sins, and in consequence of repentance forgives? And so you hope that one day or other he will do so to you. You intend some time hereafter earnestly to seek; and you hope you shall be awakened. And if you be very earnest, as you intend to be, you hope you shall be converted, and then you shall be

forgiven, and it will be as well as if you had never committed such sins.

If this be the case, consider how you boast of tomorrow, and foolishly depend on future opportunity to repent, as well as foolishly presume on the mercy of God to give you repentance, at the same time that you take a course to provoke God, forever to give you up to a sealed hardness and blindness, and to a most fearful damnation; not considering that God will glorify his revenging justice as well as his mercy; nor remembering the sad example of Esau, "who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. 12:16, 17.

Sixth, inquire, whether you improve this day, as one who doth not depend upon ever having opportunity to keep another Sabbath, or to hear or read another discourse. It appears from what hath been already said, that you have no grounds to depend on any more such opportunities. Now the day is present, and so you are in the better capacity to determine how it is with you. It is but for you to reflect upon yourselves, to look inward, and see how it is with you at this present time. And how is it? Are you as strict and as diligent in keeping this Sabbath, watching your thoughts, keeping your hearts, striving in duties both public and private, and improving ordinances, as might be expected of one who hath no dependence on ever enjoying such an opportunity anymore; one who doth not depend on ever setting foot again within the walls of God's house? — Do you attend to this address with that care, and desire, and endeavor to improve it for your good, as you would, if you did not depend upon it, that your bodies would not be in the grave, and your souls fixed in eternity, in their unalterable state, before the next Sabbath?

Seventh, are you careful to see to it that grounds of your hope are good? A man who hath some hope of being in a state of acceptance with God, but is not sure, if he had no dependence on any other day's opportunity of making it sure, would be very strict in examining himself and searching the grounds of his hope, and would not rest in an uncertainty. He would be very thorough in informing himself what might be depended on as good evidence of an interest in Christ, and what not; and would be exceedingly strict in searching his own heart, to see whether there was

anything in him that comes up to the requisites laid down in the Scriptures. — If what appears hopeful in him were dim and obscure, he would set himself very earnestly to obtain that which would be more clear and manifest, and would cry earnestly to God for it, and would apply himself to a diligent use of means in order to it. And good reason why; for he depends on no other opportunity to make his calling and election sure, than what he hath today. Inquire therefore whether you be thus thorough in examining your hope. And are you thus careful effectually to see to it, that you are on a sure foundation? If not, then you behave yourselves as those that depend on tomorrow.

SECTION VI

How to spend every day.

God hath concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as those that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counsel which Christ gives us, Mat. 24:42, 43, 44; 25:13, and Mark 13:32, etc. — That watchman is not faithful who, being set to defend a house from thieves, or a city from an enemy at hand, will at any hour venture to sleep, trusting that the thief or the enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himself every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now therefore let me, in Christ's name, renew the call and counsel of Jesus Christ to you, to watch as those that know not what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon you who are hitherto in an unrenewed condition. Depend not upon, that you will not be in hell before tomorrow morning. You have no reason for any such dependence. God hath not promised to keep you from it, or to withhold his wrath so long.

How can you reasonably be easy or quiet for one day, or one night, in such a condition, when you know not but your Lord will come this night? And if you should then be found, as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for his coming, and how fearful would be the consequence! Be exhorted therefore, for your own sakes, immediately to awake from the sleep of sin, out of sleep, and sleep no more, as not

depending on any other day. — Let me exhort you to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath, and to hear every sermon, as if it were the last. And when you go into your closet, and address yourself to your Father who seeth in secret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the same duty. When you that are young go into company for amusement and diversion, consider that it may be the *last* opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbors, act as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families everyday, as though you depended on no other. — Here I shall offer you two motives.

First, consider, if you will hearken to this counsel, how much it will tend to your safety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea, to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adversity, and for whatever God in his providence shall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedness for all changes, and particularly for your last change. — It is the way to possess your souls in a serene and undisturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immovable fortitude of soul, to meet the most frightful changes, to encounter the most formidable enemies, and to be ready with unshaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed, trusting in God, as one that stands on a firm foundation, and hath for his habitation the munition of rocks, that is not afraid of evil tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to possess the quietness and assurance spoken of. Isa. 32:17, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." — The servant who always stands watching, will not be at all surprised at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth should shake, you may stand firm and unshaken, being settled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. O how happy are such persons, who have such safety and peace! What a blessed peace is that which arises from such a constant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!

Second, what dismal calamities and miseries mankind are subject to for

want of this, for want of behaving themselves every day, as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day foolishly to depend on another, yea on many others. And what is the consequence? Why, the consequence with respect to the greater part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or rest of soul. They are all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. And when death sensibly approaches they are put into a terrible fright. They have a dismal view of their past lives. The ill improvement of their time, and the sins they have been guilty of, stand staring them in the face, and are more frightful to them than so many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how dismal is the prospect! O how do their hearts shrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgment-seat of God, as those that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they would, hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worse yet than all the disquietude and terror of conscience in this world. The consequence of a contrary behavior, with respect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal perdition. They flatter themselves that they shall see another day, and then another, and trust to that, until finally most of them are swallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. — Consider how it was with all the foolish virgins who trusted to the delay of the bridegroom's coming. When he came they were surprised, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps. And while they went to buy, those who were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut against them, and they came afterwards crying in vain, *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

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Praise, One of the Chief Employments of Heaven

"And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder;
and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." -- **Revelation 14:2**

We may observe in these words (1.) What it was that John heard, *viz.* the voice and melody of a company praising God. It is said in the next verse that they sung a new song before the throne. (2.) Whence he heard this voice, "I heard," says he, "a voice from heaven." This company that he heard praising God was in heaven. It is said in the following verse, "They sung this song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders." But the throne of God, and the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, are all represented in these visions of John, as being in heaven. So that this voice was the voice of the heavenly inhabitants, the voice of the blessed and glorious company that is in heaven, before the throne of God there. (3.) The kind of voice, which is here set forth in a very lively and elegant manner. It is said to be as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps. Hereby several things are represented in a very striking manner. 1. The distance of the voice. 2. That it was the voice of a vast and innumerable multitude, so that it was as the voice of many waters. How naturally does this represent the joint, continual, and loud voice of a vast multitude at a distance, that it resembled the voice of many waters. 3. The loudness of the voice. It was as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; which describes the extraordinary fervency of their praises, and how lively and vigorous they were therein, and how that everyone praised God with all his might. They all, joining together, sung with such fervency, that heaven did as it were ring with their praises. The noise of thunder, and the roaring of many waters, are the most great and majestic sounds ever heard upon earth, and are often spoken of in the Scriptures as the mightiest sounds. John could not distinctly hear what they sang, but they being in heaven, at a great distance, he knew not what better to compare it to, than to the roaring of the sea, or a great thunder. Yet, 4. It was a melodious sound, signified by this expression, I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. The harp was a stringed instrument that David made much use of in praising God. John represents the matter

thus to us, That the voice which he heard, being at a great distance, it was in distinct; and being of such a vast multitude, and such a mighty fervent voice, that it seemed in some measure like distant thunder, or the roaring of water, and yet he could perceive the music of the voice at the same time. Though it was in some respects as thunder and the noise of water, yet there was a sweet and excellent melody in it. In short, though these comparisons of which John makes use, to signify to us what kind of a voice and sound it was that he heard, are exceedingly lively and elegant. Yet this seems to be evident from them, that what he heard was inexpressible, and that he could find nothing that could perfectly represent it. That a voice should be as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and yet like the voice of harpers, is to us not easily to be conceived of. But the case was, that John could find no earthly sound that was sufficient to represent it; and therefore such various and different similitudes are aggregated and cast together to represent it. But thus much seems to be signified by it, that it seemed to be the voice of an innumerable multitude, and that they were exceedingly fervent and mighty in their praises. That the voice of this multitude was very great, and exceedingly full of majesty, and yet a most sweet and melodious voice at the same time.

Doctrine. The work of the saints in heaven doth very much consist in praising God.

I. *Proposition*. The saints in heaven are employed. They are not idle. They have there much to do. They have a work before them that will fill up eternity.

We are not to suppose, when the saints have finished their course and done the works appointed them here in this world, and are got to their journey's end, to their Father's house, that they will have nothing to do. It is true, the saints when they get to heaven, rest from their labors and their works follow them. Heaven is not a place of labor and travail, but a place of rest. Heb. 4:9. There remaineth a rest for the people of God. And it is a place of the reward of labor. But yet the rest of heaven does not consist in idleness, and a cessation of all action, but only a cessation from all the trouble and toil and tediousness of action. The most perfect rest is consistent with being continually employed. So it is in heaven. Though

the saints are exceedingly full of action, yet their activity is perfectly free from all labor, or weariness, or unpleasantness. They shall rest from their work, that is, from all work of labor and self-denial, and grief, care, and watchfulness, but they will not cease from action. The saints in glory are represented as employed in serving God, as well as the saints on earth, though it be without any difficulty or opposition. Rev. 22:3, "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." Yea, we are told, that they shall serve God day and night, that is, continually or without ceasing. Rev. 7:15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." And yet this shall be without any manner of trouble, as it follows in the next verse. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat." In this world saints labor, as it were, in the wearisome heat of the sun. But there, though they shall still serve God, yet shall the sun not light on them nor any heat. In one sense, the saints and angels in heaven rest not day nor night, Rev. 4:8, that is, they never cease from their blessed employment. Perfection of happiness does not consist in idleness, but on the contrary, it very much consists in action. The angels are blessed spirits, and yet they are exceedingly active in serving God. They are as a flame of fire, which is the most active thing that we see in this world. God himself enjoys infinite happiness and prefect bliss, and yet he is not inactive, but is himself in his own nature a perfect act, and is continually at work in bringing to pass his own purposes and ends. That principle of holiness that is in its perfection in the saints in heaven, is a most active principle. So that though they enjoy perfect rest, yet they are a great deal more active than they were when in this world. In this world they were exceedingly dull, and heavy, and inactive, but now they are a flame of fire. The saints in heaven are not merely passive in their happiness. They do not merely enjoy God passively, but in an active manner. They are not only acted upon by God, but they mutually act towards him, and in this action and re-action consists the heavenly happiness.

II. *Proposition*. Their employment consists very much in praising God.

John the beloved disciple had often visions of heaven, and in almost every instance had a vision of the inhabitants as praising God. So in the

fourth chapter he tells us, that he looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven, and he was called up thither, and that he saw the throne of God and him that sat on the throne. And there he gives us an account how those that were round about the throne were praising God. The four living creatures rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him, the four and twenty elders fall down before him and worship him, etc., etc. Again in the fifth chapter, we have an account how they sing praises to Christ, Rev. 5:8, 9, etc. And so in Rev. 7:9, 10, 11, 12. And in Rev. 11:16, 17. And in the twelfth chapter, 10th verse. And in Rev. 15:2, 3, 4. And in the beginning of the nineteenth chapter we have an account how the hosts of heaven sing hallelujahs to God. By all which it most evidently appears, that their work very much consists in praising God and Christ. We have but a very imperfect knowledge of the future state of blessedness, and of their employment. Without doubt they have various employments there. We cannot reasonably question but they are employed in contributing to each other's delight. They shall dwell together in society. They shall also probably be employed in contemplating on God, his glorious perfections, and glorious works, and so gaining knowledge in these things. And doubtless they will be employed many ways, that we know nothing of: but this we may determine, that much of their employment consists in praising God, and that for the following reasons.

First, because they there see God. This is a blessedness promised to the saints, that they shall see God, Mat. 5:8. That they see God, sufficiently shows the reason why they praise him. They that see God cannot but praise him. He is a Being of such glory and excellency that the sight of this excellency of his will necessarily influence them that behold it to praise him. Such a glorious sight will awaken and rouse all the powers of the soul, and will irresistibly impel them, and draw them into acts of praise. Such a sight enlarges their souls, and fills them with admiration, and with an unspeakable exultation of spirit.

'Tis from the little that the saints have seen of God, and know of him in this world that they are excited to praise him in the degree they do here. But here they see but as in a glass darkly; they have only now and then a

little glimpse of God's excellency. But then they shall have the transcendent gory and divine excellency of God set in their immediate and full view. They shall dwell in his immediate glorious presence and shall see face to face, 1 Cor. 13:12. Now the saints see the glory of God but by a reflected light, as we in the night see the light of the sun reflected from the moon. But in heaven they shall directly behold the Sun of righteousness, and shall look full upon him when shining in all his glory. This being the case, it can be no otherwise, but that they should very much employ themselves in praising God. When they behold the glorious power of God, they cannot but praise that power. When they see God's wisdom that is so wonderful, and infinitely beyond all created wisdom, they cannot but continually praise that wisdom. When they view the infinitely pure and lovely holiness of God, whereby the heavens themselves are not pure in comparison with him, how can they avoid with an exalted heart to praise that beauty of the divine nature! When they see the infinite grace of God, and see what a boundless ocean of mercy and love he is, how can they but celebrate that grace with the highest praise!

Second, they will have another sense of the greatness of the fruits of God's mercy than we have here in this world. They will not only have a sight of the glorious attributes of God's goodness and mercy in their beatific vision of God, but they will be sensible of the exceeding greatness of the fruits of it; the greatness of the benefits that he has bestowed. They will have another sense of the greatness and manifoldness of the communications of his goodness to his creation in general. They will be more sensible how that God is the fountain of all good, the Father of lights, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift. We do now but little consider, in comparison with what we should do, how full the world is of God's goodness, and how it appears in the sun, moon, and stars, and in the earth and seas, with all their fullness, and wheresoever we turn our eyes, and how all ranks and orders of being, from the highest angel to the lowest insect, are dependent upon, and maintained by, the goodness of God. These the saints in heaven clearly see. They see how the universe is replenished with his goodness, and how the communications of his goodness are incessantly issuing from God as from an everflowing fountain, and are poured forth all around in vast profusion into every part of heaven and earth, as light is every moment diffused from the sun. We

have but faint imperfect notions of these things, but the saints in heaven see them with perfect clearness. They have another sense of the greatness of God's goodness to mankind, and to the church, and to them in particular, than any of us have. They have another sense of the greatness of God's goodness in the temporal mercies which God bestowed upon them while they were here in this world, though they know that spiritual mercies are infinitely greater. But especially they have an immensely greater sense of the exceeding greatness of the fruits of God's grace and mercy bestowed in redemption. They have another sense how great a gift the gift of God's only-begotten Son is. They have another sense of the greatness and dignity of the person of Christ, and how great a thing it was for him to become man, and how great a thing it was for him to lay down his life, and to endure the shameful and accursed death of the cross. They have another sense how great the benefits are that Christ has purchased for men, how great a mercy it is to have sin pardoned, and to be delivered from the misery of hell. They have another sense how dreadful that misery is, for the damned are tormented in the presence of the holy angels and saints, and they see the smoke of their torment; and have another sense what eternity is, and so are proportionably more sensible how great a mercy it is to be delivered from that torment. They have another sense how great a fruit of God's grace it is to be the children of God, and to have a right and title to eternal glory. They are sensible of the greatness of the benefits that Christ has purchased, by their experience. For they are in possession of the blessedness and glory that he has purchased. They taste the sweetness of it. And therefore they are more sensible what cause they have to praise God for these things. The grace and goodness of God in the work of redemption appears so wonderful to them that their thoughts of it do excite them to the most ardent praise. When they take a view of the grace of God and of the love of Christ in redemption, they see that there is cause that they should exert the utmost of their capacities, and spend an eternity in praising God and the Lamb. It is but a very little that we at best can conceive of the greatness of the benefits of redemption, and therefore we are but little affected by it, and our praises for it are low and dull things.

Third, another reason is [that] they will be perfect in humility. In order to a person's being rightly disposed to the work of praise, he must be an

humble person. A proud person is for assuming all praise to himself and is not disposed to ascribe it to God. It is humility only that will enable us to say from the heart, “Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory.” The humble person admires the goodness and grace of God to him. He sees more how wonderful it is that God should take such notice of him, and show such kindness to him, that is so much below his notice. Now the saints in heaven have this grace of humility perfected in them. They do as much excel the saints on earth in humility as in other graces. Though they are so much above the saints on earth in holiness and in their exalted state, yet they are vastly more humble than the saints on earth be. They are as much lower in humility as they are higher in honor and happiness. And the reason of it is that they know more of God. They see more of his greatness and infinite highness, and therefore are more sensible how wonderful it is that God should take so much notice of them, to have such communion with them, and give them such a full enjoyment of him. They are far more sensible what unworthy creatures they have been, that God should bestow such mercies upon them, than the saints on earth. They have a greater sight of the evil of sin. They see more what filthy vile creatures they were by nature, and how dreadfully they provoked God by actual sin, and how they have deserved God’s hatred and wrath. The saints in heaven have as much greater a sense of their unworthiness in their natural state than the saints on earth as they have a greater sense of God’s glorious excellency. For it is the sight of God’s excellency which gives them a sight of their own unworthiness. And therefore they do proportionally admire the love of God to them in giving Christ to die for them, and the love of Christ in being willing to offer himself for their sins, and of the wonderful mercy of God in their conversion, and bestowing eternal life upon them. The humble sense the saints have of their own unworthiness, doth greatly engage and enlarge their hearts in praise to him for his infinite mercy and grace.

Fourth, their love to God and Christ will be perfect. Love is a principal ingredient in the grace of thankfulness. There is a counterfeit thankfulness in which there is no love. But there is love in exercise in all sincere thankfulness. And the greater any person’s love is, the more will he be disposed to praise. Love will cause him to delight in the work. He that loves God, proportionably seeks the glory of God, and loves to give

him glory. Now the hearts of the saints in heaven are all, as it were, a pure flame of love. Love is the grace that never faileth. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Faith shall cease in vision, and hope in fruition, but love never faileth. The grace of love will be exalted to its greatest height and highest perfection in heaven. And love will vent itself in praise. Heaven will ring with praise because it is full of love to God. This is the reason that great assembly, that innumerable host, [praises] God with such ardency, that their praise is as the voice of many waters, and as the mighty thunderings, because they are animated by so ardent, vigorous, and powerful a principle of divine love.

APPLICATION

I. This subject may be applied in the way of INSTRUCTION.

First, hence we may learn the excellency of this work of praising God. That it is a most excellent employment, appears because it is a heavenly employment. It is that work wherein the saints and angels are continually employed.

If we sincerely and frequently praise God, we shall therein be like the heavenly inhabitants, and join with them.

That it is the work of heaven shows it to be the most honorable work. No employment can be a greater honor to a man than to praise God. It is the peculiar dignity of the nature of man, and the very thing wherein his nature is exalted above things without reason, and things without life, that he is made capable of actively glorifying his Creator. Other creatures do glorify God. The sun, moon, and stars, and the earth and waters, and all the trees of the field, and grass and herbs, and fishes and insects do glorify God. Psa. 19:1-6; Job 12:7, 8. But herein is the peculiar dignity of the nature of man, that he is capable of glorifying him as a cause, by counsel, understandingly and voluntarily, which is a heavenly work.

Second, this doctrine may give us an idea of the glorious and happy state of the saints in heaven. It shows how joyfully and gloriously they spend their time. Joy is a great ingredient in praise. There is an exultation of

spirit in fervent praise. Praise is the most joyful work in the world. And how joyful a society are they that join together, so many thousands and millions of them, with one heart and one soul, to sing a new song before the throne, that fill heaven with their glorious melody! How joyful they are in their work, appears in the text, by their fervency in it, so that their voices resounded as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. What ineffable joy was there in those harpers whom John heard harping with their harps!

This shows how different a state the saints are in in heaven, from what they are in this world. Here much of the work to which the saints are called, consists in laboring, in fighting, in toilsome traveling in a waste howling wilderness, in mourning and suffering, and in offering up strong crying and tears. But there in heaven, their work continually is to lift up their joyful songs of praise.

This world is a valley of tears, a world filled with sighs and groans. One is groaning under some bodily pain. Another is mourning and lamenting over a dear departed friend. Another is crying out by reason of the arm of the oppressor. But in heaven there is no mixture of such sounds as these. There is nothing to be heard amongst them but the sweet and glorious melody of God's praises. There is a holy cheerfulness to be seen throughout that blessed society. Rev. 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." They shall never have anything more to do with sighing and crying; but their eternal work henceforward shall be praise.

This should make us long for heaven, where they spend their time so joyfully and gloriously. The saints especially have reason to be earnestly breathing after that happy state, where they may in so joyful a manner praise God.

Third, this may put natural persons upon reflecting on their own state, that they have no part nor lot in this matter. You are an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. You are not one of the people of God. You do not belong to their society that are to spend their eternity after that joyful manner, which you have now heard. You have no right nor portion in heaven. If you hereafter come and offer yourself to be admitted into this

blessed society, in your present state; if you come and try to be admitted, you will be thrust out. You will be driven away. If you come and knock, and cry to be admitted to the wedding, saying, *Lord, Lord, open unto us,* all will be to no purpose! You will hear no other word except *Depart!* You shall be shut out into outer darkness. You shall not be permitted to sing among the children, but shall be driven out, to howl among dogs. Rev. 22:14, 15, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city; for without are dogs," etc. You are in danger of spending eternity, not in joyfully singing praises, but in a quite contrary manner; in weeping, in wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and blaspheming God because of your pains and because of your plagues. You shall see others coming from the east and the west, and sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, taking their places among that blessed, happy society, and joining their voices in their heavenly music. But you see your lot. You shall have other work to do. Isa. 65:14, "Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit."

II. In the way of EXHORTATION. — If it be so that praising God is very much the employment of heaven, hence let all be exhorted to the work and duty of praising God. The following considerations will show why we should be stirred up by this doctrine to this work.

First, let it be considered that the church on earth is the same society with those saints who are praising God in heaven. There is not one church of Christ in heaven, and another here upon earth. Though the one be sometimes called the church triumphant, and the other the church militant, yet they are not indeed two churches. By the church triumphant is meant the triumphant part of the church. And by the church militant, the militant part of it, for there is but one universal or catholic church. Song 6:9, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." Christ has and hath many members." The glorious assembly and the saints on earth make but one family. Eph. 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Though some are in heaven, and some on earth, in very different circumstances, yet they are all united. For there is but *one body, and one spirit, and one Lord Jesus Christ. One God and Father of all, who is*

above all, and through all, and in all. God hath in Christ united the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy inhabitants of this earth, and hath made them one. Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Heaven is at a great distance from the earth. It is called a *far country*. Mat. 25:14. Yet the distance of place does not separate them so as to make two societies. For though the saints on earth, at present, are at a distance from heaven, yet they belong there. That is their proper home. The saints that are in this world are strangers here. And therefore the apostle reproved the Christians in his day, for acting as though they belonged to this world. Col. 2:20, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?"

Some of a people may be in their own land, and some in a strange land. And yet be but one people. Some of a family may be at home, and some sojourning abroad. And yet be but one family. The saints on earth, though they be not actually in heaven, yet have their inheritance in heaven, and are traveling towards heaven, and will arrive there in a little time. They are nearly related to the saints in heaven. They are their brethren, being children of the same Father, and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. In Eph. 2:19, the saints on earth are said to be *fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* And the apostle tells the Christian Hebrews, Heb. 12:22-24, that they were "come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." But how were they *come* to this heavenly city, and this glorious assembly, when they were yet here on earth? They were come to them, ere they were brought and united to them in the same family. But this is what I would inculcate by all this, that the church of God on earth ought to be employed in the same work with the saints in heaven, because they are the same society. As they are but one family, have but one Father, one inheritance, so they should have but one work. The church on earth ought to join with the saints in heaven in their employment, as God hath joined them in one society by his grace.

We profess to be of the visible people of Christ, to be Christians and not heathens, and so belong to the universal church. We profess therefore to be of the same society, and shall not walk answerably to our profession, unless we employ ourselves in the same work.

Second, let it be considered, that we all of us hope to spend an eternity with the saints in heaven, and in the same work of praising God. There is, it may be, not one of us but who hopes to be a saint in heaven, and there continually to sing praises to God and the Lamb. But how disagreeable will it be with such a hope, to live in the neglect of praising God now! We ought now to begin that work which we intend shall be the work of another world. For this life is given us on purpose that therein we might prepare for a future life. The present state is a state of probation and preparation, a state of preparation for the enjoyments and employment of another, future, and eternal state. And no one is ever admitted to those enjoyments and employments, but those who are prepared for them here. If ever we would go to heaven, we must be fitted for heaven in this world. We must here have our souls molded and fashioned for that work and that happiness. They must be formed for praise, and they must begin their work here. The beginnings of future things are in this world. The seed must be sown here. The foundation must be laid in this world. Here is laid the foundation of future misery, and of future happiness. If it be not begun here, it never will be begun. If our hearts be not in some measure tuned to praise in this world, we shall never do anything at the work hereafter. The light must dawn in this world, or the sun will never rise in the next. As we therefore all of us would be, and hope to be, of that blessed company which praise God in heaven, we should now inure ourselves to the work.

Third, those works of God's mercy for which the saints in heaven will chiefly praise him, have been wrought amongst us in this world.

The mercy and grace of God for which the saints in heaven will chiefly praise him is his mercy exercised in he work of redemption, which work has been wrought out in this world. This love of God is the chief object of their admiration, and what they chiefly contemplate, and that employs their most ardent praises.

The grace of Christ, about which their praises will be principally employed is that he should so love sinful man as to undertake for him, to take upon him man's nature, and lay down his life for him. We find that is the subject of their praises in Rev. 5:8, 9, "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints; and they sang a new song, Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

They will chiefly praise God for these fruits of his mercy, because these are the greatest fruits of it that ever have been, far greater than the glorifying of saints. The saints in heaven will praise God for bestowing glory upon them. But the actual bestowment of glory upon them, after it has been purchased by the blood of Christ, is in no measure so great a thing as the purchasing of it by his blood. For Christ, the eternal Son of God, to become man, and to lay down his life, was a far greater thing than the glorifying of all the saints that ever have been, or ever will be glorified, from the beginning of the world to the end of it. The giving Christ to die, comprehends all other mercies. For all other mercies are through this. The giving of Christ is a greater thing than the giving of all things else for the sake of Christ. This evidently appears, from Rom. 8:32, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" So that the work of redemption is that for which the saints in heaven do chiefly praise God. But this work has been wrought here, among us in this world. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The incarnation of Christ was a thing that was brought to pass in this world, and the sufferings and death of Christ were also accomplished on earth. Shall heaven be filled with praises for what was done on earth, and shall there be no praises on earth where it was done?

Fourth, if you praise God sincerely in this world, it will be a sign that you are really to be one of those that shall praise him in heaven. If any man be found sincerely glorifying God, he will in due time be brought to them, as one who is fit to be of their company. Heaven is the appointed place of all sincere praisers of God. They are all to be gathered together there. And no man can sincerely praise God unless he be one of those who are redeemed

from among men, one that God has separated from the rest of the world, and set apart for himself.

Fifth, if we begin now to exercise ourselves in the work of heaven, it will be the way to have foretastes of the enjoyments of heaven. The business and the happiness go together. This will be the way to have your heart filled with spiritual joy and comfort. If you heartily praise God, you shall rejoice in him, and he will show you more of himself, of his glory and love, that you may still have greater cause of praise.

I proceed to give some DIRECTIONS for the performance of this work.

First, be directed, in order to your acceptably performing this duty, to repent of your sins, and turn to God. If you have not a work of conversion wrought in you, you will do nothing to any purpose in this work of praise. An unconverted person never once sincerely or acceptably praises God. If you would do the work of the saints in heaven, you must be, not only in profession, but really, one of their society. For there are none else can do their work. As in the verse following the text: “And they sung as it were a new song, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty-four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” A hundred and forty-four thousand is a mystical number for the church of God, or the assembly of the saints, or those that are redeemed from the earth.. There is no man can learn the song that they sing in heaven, but those of that number. It is beyond the reach of all natural men, let them be persons of ever so great abilities and sagacity. They never can learn that heavenly song, if they be not of that number. For it is only the sanctifying, saving instruction of the Spirit of God, that can teach us that song.

Second, labor after more and more of those principles from whence the praise of the saints in heaven doth arise. You have already heard that the saints in heaven do praise the Lord so fervently because they *see* him. Labor therefore that you, though you have not an immediate vision of God, as they have, may yet have a clear spiritual sight of him, and that you may know more of God, and have frequent discoveries of him made to you.

You have heard that the saints in heaven make praise so much their work, because of the great sense they have of the greatness and wonderfulness of the fruits of the Lord's goodness. Labor therefore to get your minds more deeply impressed with such a sense.

The saints in glory are so much employed in praise, because they are perfect in *humility*, and have so great a sense of the infinite distance between God and them. They have a great sense of their own unworthiness, that they are by nature unworthy of any of the mercy of God. Labor therefore that you may obtain more of a sense of your own littleness, and vileness; that you may see more what you are, how ill you have deserved at the hands of God, and how you are less than the least of all his mercies.

The hearts of the saints in heaven are all inflamed with divine *love*, which continually influences them to praise God. Seek that this principle may abound in you, and then you likewise will delight in praising God. It will be a most sweet and pleasant employment to you.

Third, labor, in your praises, to praise God, so far as may be, in the same manner that the saints do in heaven. They praise him *fervently*, with their whole heart, and with all their strength, as was represented in vision to John by the exceeding loudness of their praise. Labor therefore that you may not be cold and dull in your praises, but that you also may praise God fervently.

The saints in heaven praise God *humbly*. Let it also be your delight to abase yourselves, to exalt God, and set him upon the throne, and to lie at his footstool.

The saints in heaven praise God *unitedly*. They praise him with one heart and one soul, in a most firm union. Endeavor that you may thus praise God in union with his people, having your hearts knit to them in fervent love and charity, which will be a great help to your praising and glorifying God unitedly with them.

III. In the way of REPROOF to those who neglect the *singing* of God's praises. Certainly, such a neglect is not consonant to the hope and

expectation of spending an eternity in that work. It is an appointment of God, that we should not only praise in our prayers, but that we should *sing* his praises. It was a part of divine worship, not only under the Old Testament, but the New. Thus we read that Christ and his disciples sung praises together, Mat. 26:30. So it is commanded, Eph. 5:18, 19, "Be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." And Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." 1 Cor. 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." So also the saints in heaven are represented as singing God's praises. And is that their happy and glorious employment; and yet shall it be so neglected by us, who hope for heaven? If there be any of the godly that do neglect this duty, I would desire them to consider how discordant such a neglect is with their profession, with their state, and with the mercies which God has bestowed. How much cause has God given you to sing his praise! You have received more to prompt you to praise God than all the natural men in the world. And can you content yourself to live in the world without singing the praises of your heavenly Father, and your glorious Redeemer?

Parents ought to be careful that their children are instructed in singing, that they may be capable of performing that part of divine worship. This we should do, as we would have our children trained up for heaven, for we all of us would have our children go to heaven.

IV. In the way of CONSOLATION to the godly. It may be matter of great comfort to you that you are to spend your eternity with the saints in heaven, where it is so much their work to praise God. The saints are sensible what cause they have to praise God, and oftentimes are ready to say they long to praise him more and that they never can praise him enough. This may be a consolation to you, that you shall have a whole eternity in which to praise him. They earnestly desire to praise God better. This, therefore, may be your consolation, that in heaven your heart shall be enlarged, you shall be enabled to praise him in an immensely more perfect and exalted manner than you can do in this

world. You shall not be troubled with such a dead, dull heart, with so much coldness, so many clogs and burdens from corruption, and from a earthly mind; with a wandering, unsteady heart; with so much darkness and so much hypocrisy. You shall be one of that vast assembly that praise God so fervently, that their voice is “as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings.”

You long to have others praise God, to have every one praise him. There there will be enough to help you, and join you in praising him, and those that are capable of doing it ten thousand times better than saints on earth. Thousands and thousands of angels and glorified saints will be around you, all united to you in the dearest love, all disposed to praise God, not only for themselves, but for his mercy to you.

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Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer

"Will he always call upon God?" [Job 27:10]

Concerning these words, I would observe,

1. Who it is that is here spoken of, viz. the hypocrite; as you may see, If you take the two preceding verses with the verse of the text. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God bear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call up on God?" Job's three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it, that he was an hypocrite. But Job, in this chapter, asserts his sincerity and integrity, and shows how different his own behavior had been from that of hypocrite. Particularly he declares his steadfast and immoveable

resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of religion and righteousness to the end; as you may see in the six first verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this steadfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is, who is not wont thus to hold out in religion

2. We may observe what duty of religion it is, with respect to which the hypocrite is deciphered in the text, and that is the duty of prayer; or calling upon God.

3. Here is something supposed of the hypocrite relating to this duty, viz. That he may continue in it for a while; he may call upon God for a season.

4. Something asserted, viz. That it is not the manner of hypocrites to continue always in this duty. Will he always call upon God? It is in the form of an interrogation; but the words have the force of a strong negation, or of an assertion, that however the hypocrite may call upon God for a season, yet he will not always continue in it.

DOCTRINE

However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure, to leave it off. In speaking upon this doctrine, I shall show,

I. How hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God.
II. How it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.
III. Give some reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

I. I would show how hypocrites often continue for a season in the duty of prayer.

1. They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may, through fear of hell, call upon God, and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God, or with some affecting encouragements, and false joy and comfort; while these impressions last

they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

2. After they have obtained an hope, and have made profession of their good estate, they often continue for a while in the duty of secret prayer. For a while they are affected with their hope: They think that God hath delivered them out of a natural condition, and given them an interest in Christ, thus introducing them into a state of safety from that eternal misery which they lately feared. With this supposed kindness of God to them, they are much affected, and often find in themselves for a while a kind of love to God, excited by his supposed love to them. Now, while this affection towards God continues, the duties of religion seem pleasant to them; it is even with some delight that they approach to God in their closets; and for the present it may be, they think of no other than continuing to call upon God as long as they live.

Yea, they may continue in the duty of secret prayer for awhile after the liveliness of their affections is past, partly through the influence of their former intentions: They intended to continue seeking God always; and now suddenly to leave off, would therefore be too shocking to their own minds and partly through the force of their own preconceived notions, and what they have always believed, viz. That godly persons do continue in religion, and that their goodness is not like the morning cloud. Therefore, though they have no love to the duty of prayer, and begin to grow weary of it, yet as they love their own hope, they are somewhat backward to take a course, which will prove it to be a false hope, and so deprive them of it.

If they should at once carry themselves so as they have always been taught is a sign of a false hope, they would scare themselves Their hope is dear to them, and it would scare them to see any plain evidence that it is not true. Hence, for a considerable time after the force of their illuminations and affections is over, and after they hate the duty of prayer, and would be glad to have done with it, if they could, without showing themselves to be hypocrites; they hold up a kind of attendance upon the duty of secret prayer. This may keep up the outside of religion in them for a good while, and occasion it to be somewhat slowly that they are brought to neglect it. They must not leave off suddenly, because that would be too great a shock to their false peace. But they must come

gradually to it, as they find their consciences can bear it, and as they can find out devices and salvos to cover over the matter, and make their so doing consistent, in their own opinion, with the truth of their hope. But,

II. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.

We are often taught, that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practice it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore they may omit this duty, and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees without very much shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet they find means by degrees to alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to that, in their notions of things, that a man may be a convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together, an hope of heaven, and an indulgence of sloth in gratifying carnal appetites, and living in a great measure a prayerless life. They cannot indeed suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time; and length of time will effect it. By degrees they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies; so that those enemies, and a quiet, secure conscience, can at length dwell pretty well together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine, that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off this duty; I would observe to you,

1. That it is not intended but that they may commonly continue to the end

of life in yielding an external attendance on open prayer, or prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before ever they are so much as awakened. Many vicious persons, who make no pretense to serious religion, commonly attend public prayers in the congregation; and also more private prayers, in the families in which they live, unless it be when carnal designs interfere, or when their youthful pleasures and diversions, and their vain company call them; and then they make no conscience of attending family prayer. Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own. Many of those concerning whom it maybe said, as in Job xv. 4, That they cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, are yet frequently present at family and public prayer.

2. But they in a great measure leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first they begin to be careless about it, under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company, or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once: After that they more easily omit it again. Thus it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it and after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath days, and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone, and to seek his face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience, and just to keep alive their old hope; because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtle dealing with their consciences to call themselves converts, and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet the practice of secret prayer they have in a great measure left off.

I come now,

III. To the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

1. Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer given them. They may have

been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute of the true spirit of prayer. The spirit of prayer is an holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. iii. 10. I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications. Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God, to converse with him by prayer. Therefore the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do, and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that be is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, an hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is, since his conversion, rather increased.

3. The hope which the hypocrite hath of his good estate takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience; so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty. The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceeding plain; Matt. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always with all

prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." Matt. vi. 6. "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." As long as the hypocrite was in his own apprehension in continual danger of hell, he durst not disobey these commands. But since he is, as he thinks, safe from hell, he is grown bold, he dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

4. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, to return to sinful practices, which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives, and walked very exactly. This reformation continues for a little time perhaps after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive, and they by degrees return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They return to their sensual practices, to their worldly practices, to their proud and contentious practices, as before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closets. Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from willful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allow himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying. It will give quite another turn to his mind, so that he will have no disposition to the practice of such a duty It will be contrary to him. A man who knows that he lives in sin against God, will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God; but will rather be inclined to fly from his presence, as Adam, when he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, ran away from God, and hid himself among the trees of the garden.

To keep up the duty of prayer after he hath given loose to his lusts, would tend very much to disquiet a man's conscience. It would give advantage to his conscience to testify aloud against him. If he should come from his wickedness into the presence of God, immediately to speak to him, his conscience would, as it were; fly in his face. Therefore hypocrites, as they by degrees admit their wicked practices, exclude prayer.

5. Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following him to the end of life. To continue instant in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life, requires much care, watchfulness, and

labor. For much opposition is made to it by the flesh, the world, and the devil and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this practice. He that would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general. But hypocrites never count the cost of such labor; i. e. they never were prepared in the disposition of their minds to give their lives to the service of God, and to the duties of religion. It is therefore no great wonder if they are weary and give out, after they have continued for a while, as their affections are gone, and they find that prayer to them grows irksome and tedious.

6. Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God hath made to his people, of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end. God hath promised to true saints that they shall not forsake him; Jer. xxxii. 40. I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. He hath promised that he will keep them in the way of their duty; 1 Thess. v 23, 24. And the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. But hypocrites have no interest in these and such like promises and therefore are liable to fall away. If God do not uphold men, there is no dependence on their steadfastness. If the Spirit of God depart from them, they will soon become careless and profane, and there will be an end to their seeming devotion and piety.

APPLICATION

May be in an use of EXHORTATION in two branches.

I. I would exhort those who have entertained an hope of their being true converts, and yet since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and do ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it, to throw away their hope.

If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go an hope of heaven, on which he hath once allowed

himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing; but that men are brought off from a false hope of conversion, after they are once settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare.

Those things in men, which, if they were known to others, would be sufficient to convince others that they are hypocrites, will not convince themselves; and those things which would be sufficient to convince them concerning others, and to cause them to cast others entirely out of their charity, will not be sufficient to convince them concerning themselves. They can make larger allowances for themselves than they can for others. They can find out ways to solve objections against their own hope, when they can find none in the like case for their neighbor.

But it your case be such as is spoken of in the doctrine, it is surely time for you to seek a better hope, and another work of God's Spirit, than ever you have yet experienced; something more thorough and effectual. When you see and find by experience, that the seed which was sown in your hearts, though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing, yet is withering away, as by the heat of the sun, or is choked, as with thorns; this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown, that it is either stony or thorny ground; and that therefore it is necessary you should pass through another change, whereby your heart may become good ground, which shall bring forth fruit with patience.

I insist not on that as a reason why you should not throw away your hope, that you had the judgment of others, that the change of which you were the subject was right. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you be approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise. I Cor. iv. 3. " It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." If your goodness have proved to be as the morning cloud and early dew if you be one of those who have forsaken God, and left off calling upon his name, you have the judgment of God, and the sentence of God in the Scriptures against you, which is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favor.

Others, from your account of things, may have been obliged to have

charity for you, and to think that, provided you were not mistaken, and in your account did not misrepresent things, or express them by wrong terms, you were really converted. But what a miserable foundation is this, upon which to build an hope as to your eternal state!

Here I request your attention to a few things in particular, which I have to say to you concerning your hope.

1. Why will you retain that hope which by evident experience you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think, that an holy hope, an hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No surely; nothing of such a malignant influence comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison groweth in the paradise of God. The same hope which leads men to sin in this world will lead to hell hereafter. Why therefore will you retain such an hope, of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For certainly that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well known a duty as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that by which this duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast till you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope, and embrace it so closely, that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold. Consider how you will answer it at the day of judgment when God shall call you to an account for your folly in resting in such an hope. Will it be a sufficient answer for you to say, that you had the charity of others, and that they thought your conversion was right?

Certainly it is foolish for men to imagine, that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life than one which should encourage men to forsake him.

2. How is your doing, as you do, consistent with loving God above all? If you have not spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and

your most pleasant earthly enjoyments; the scriptures are very plain, and full in it, that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to him, and become habitually so averse to it, as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty which is so much the life of a child of God? It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them. But when a person who hath heretofore been wont to converse freely with another, by degrees forsakes him, grows strange, and converses with him but little, and that although the other be importunate with him for the continuance of their former intimacy; this plainly shows the coldness of his heart towards him.

The neglect of the duty of prayer seems to be inconsistent with supreme love to Go also upon another account, and that is, that it is against the will of God so plainly revealed. True love to God seeks to please God in every thing, and universally to conform to his will.

3 Your thus restraining prayer before God is not only inconsistent with the love, but also with the fear of God it is an argument that you cast off fear, as is manifest by that text, Job. xv. 4. "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." While you thus live in the transgression of so plain a command of God, you evidently show, that there is no fear of God before your eyes. Psal. xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

4. Consider how living in such a neglect is inconsistent with leading an holy life. We are abundantly instructed in scripture, that true Christians do lead an holy life; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14; and that every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure, 1 John iii. 3. In Prov. xvi. 17, it is said, The highway of the upright is to depart from evil, i.e. it is, as it were, the common beaten road in which all the godly travel. To the like purpose is Isa. xxxv. 8. A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those, i. e. those redeemed persons spoken of in the foregoing verses. It is spoken of in Rom. viii. 1, as the character of all believers, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

But how is a life, in a great measure prayerless, consistent with an holy life? To lead an holy life is to lead a life devoted to God; a life of worshipping and serving God; a life consecrated to the service of God. But how doth he lead such a life who doth not so much as maintain the duty of prayer? How can such a man be said to walk by the Spirit and to be a servant of the Most High God? An holy life is a life of faith. The life that true Christians live in the world they live by the faith of the Son of God. But who can believe that man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which, is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible, as to say, that a man lives without breathing. A prayerless life is so far from being an holy life, that it is a profane life. He that lives so, lives like an heathen, who calleth not on God's name; he that lives a prayerless life, lives without God in the world.

5. If you live in the neglect of secret prayer, you show your good will to neglect all the worship of God. He that prays only when he prays with others, would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He that will not pray where none but God seeth him, manifestly doth not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to his all-seeing eye, and therefore doth in effect cast off all prayer. And he that casts off prayer, in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty. Now, what a miserable saint is he who is no worshipper of God! He that casts off the worship of God, in effect casts off God himself: He refuses to own him, or to be conversant with him as his God. For the way in which men own God, and are conversant with him as their God, is by worshipping him.

6. How can you expect to dwell with God for ever, if you so neglect and forsake him here? This your practice shows, that you place not your happiness in God, in nearness to him, and communion with him. He Who refuses to come and visit, and converse with a friend, and who in a great measure forsakes him, when he is abundantly invited and importuned to come; plainly shows that he places not his happiness in, the company and conversation of that friend. Now, if this be the case with you respecting God, then how can you expect to have it for your happiness to all eternity,

to be with God, and to enjoy holy communion with him?

Let those persons who hope they are converted, and yet have in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, and whose manner it is ordinarily to neglect it, for their own sake seriously consider these things. For what will profit then to please themselves with that, while they live, which will fail them at last, and leave them in fearful and amazing disappointment?

It is probable, that some of you who have entertained a good, opinion of your state, and have looked upon yourselves as converts; but have of late in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer; will this evening attend secret prayer, and so continue to do for a little while; after your hearing this sermon, to the end, that you may solve the difficulty, and the objection which is made against the truth of your hope. But this will not hold. As it hath been in former instances of the like nature, so what you now hear will have such effect upon you but a little while. When the business and cares of the world shall again begin to crowd a little upon you, or next time you shall go out into young company, it is probable you will again neglect this duty. The next time a frolic shall be appointed, to which it is proposed to you to go, it is highly probable you will neglect not only secret prayer; but also family prayer. Or at least, after a while, you will come to the same pass again, as before, in casting off fear and restraining prayer before God.

It is not very likely that you will ever be constant and persevering in this duty, until you shall have obtained a better principle in your hearts. The streams which have no springs to feed them will dry up. The drought and heat consume the snow waters. Although they run plentifully in the spring, yet when the sun ascends higher with a burning heat they are gone. The seed that is sown in stony places, though it seem to flourish at present, yet as the sun shall rise with a burning heat, will wither away. None will bring forth fruit with patience, but those whose hearts are become good ground.

Without any heavenly seed remaining in them, men may whenever they fall in among the godly, continue all their lives to talk like saints. They may, for their credit's sake, tell of what they have experienced But their

deeds will not hold. They may continue to tell of their inward experiences, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, and of other duties.

II. I would take occasion from this doctrine to exhort all to persevere in the duty of prayer.

This exhortation is much insisted on in the word of God. It is insisted on in the Old Testament; I Chron. xvi. II. "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually."...Isai. lxii. 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" i. e. be not silent as to the voice of prayer, as is manifest by the following words, "and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," Israel of old is reproved for growing weary of the duty of prayer. Isai. xliii. 22. "But thou hast not called upon me, 0 Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, 0 Israel."

Perseverance in the duty of prayer is very much insisted on in the New Testament; as Luke xviii. at the beginning, "A man ought always to pray, and not to faint;" i. e. not to be discouraged or weary of the duty; but should always continue in it. Again, Luke xxi. 36. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always." We have the example of Anna the prophetess set before us, Luke i. 36, &c. who, though she had lived to be more than an hundred years old, yet never was weary of this duty. It is said, "She departed not from the temple, but served God, with fastings and prayers, night and day." Cornelius also is commended for his constancy in this duty. It is said, that he prayed to God always; Acts x. 2. The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, insists very much on constancy in this duty; Rom. xii. 12. "Continuing instant in prayer." Eph. vi. 18,19. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." I Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing." To the same effect the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "Watch unto prayer."....Thus abundantly the scripture insists upon it, that we should persevere in the duty of prayer; which shows that, it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary be the manner of hypocrites, as hath been shown in the doctrine, then surely we ought to beware of this leaven.

But here let the following things be particularly considered as motives to

perseverance in this duty.

1. That perseverance in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, and is abundantly declared so to be in the holy scriptures; as Isai. lxiv. 5. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: Behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: In those is continuance, and we shall be saved." Heb. x. 38, 39. "Now the just shall live by faith: But if any man draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Rom. xi. 22. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off....So in many other places.

Many, when they think they are converted, seem to imagine that their work is done, and that there is nothing else needful in order to their going to heaven. Indeed perseverance in holiness of life is not necessary to salvation, as the righteousness by which a right to salvation is obtained. Nor is actual perseverance necessary in order to our becoming interested in that righteousness by which we are justified. For as soon as ever a soul hath believed in Christ, or hath put forth one act of faith in him, it becomes interested in his righteousness, and in all the promises purchased by it.

But persevering in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, as a concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation. There is never a title to salvation without it, though it be not the righteousness by which a title to salvation is obtained. It is necessary to salvation, as it is the necessary consequence of true faith. It is an evidence which universally attends uprightness, and the defect of it is an infallible evidence of the want of uprightness. Psal. cxxv. 4, 5. There such as are good and upright in heart, are distinguished from such as fall away or turn aside: "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel." It is mentioned as an evidence that the hearts of the children of Israel were not right with God, that they did not persevere in the ways of holiness. Psal. lxxviii. 8. "A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose

spirit was not steadfast with God."

Christ gives this as a distinguishing character of those that are his disciples indeed, and of a true and saving faith, that it is accompanied with perseverance in the obedience of Christ's word. John viii. 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." This is mentioned as a necessary evidence of an interest in Christ, Heb. iii. 14. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation; but also a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life. It is the only way to heaven, the narrow way that leadeth to life. Hence Christ exhorts the church of Philadelphia to persevere in holiness from this consideration, that it was necessary in order to her obtaining the crown. Rev. iii. 11. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is necessary, not only that persons should once have been walking in the way of duty, but that they should be found so doing when Christ cometh. Luke ix. 43. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Holding out to the end is often made the condition of actual salvation. Mat. x. 22. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved:" And Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

2. In order to your own perseverance in the way of duty, your own care and watchfulness is necessary. For though it be promised that true saints shall persevere, yet that is no argument that their care and watchfulness is not necessary in order to it; because their care to keep the commands of God is the thing promised. If the saints should fail of care, watchfulness, and diligence to persevere in holiness, that failure of their care and diligence would itself be a failure of holiness. They who persevere not in watchfulness and diligence, persevere not in holiness of life, for holiness of life very much consists in watchfulness and diligence to keep the commands of God. It is one promise of the covenant of grace, that the Saints shall keep God's commandments. Ezek. xi. 19, 20. Yet that is no argument that they have no need to take care to keep these commandments, or to do their duty. So the promise of God, that the saints shall persevere in holiness, is no argument that it is not necessary

that they should take heed lest they fall away.

Therefore the scriptures abundantly warn men to watch over themselves diligently, and to give earnest heed lest they fall away. 1 Cor. xv. 13. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. x. 12. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Heb. iii. 12, 13, 14. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Heb. iv. 1. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." 2 Peter iii. 17. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 John v. 8. "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Thus you see how earnestly the scriptures press on Christians exhortations to take diligent heed to themselves that they fall not away. And certainly these cautions are not without reason.

The scriptures particularly insist upon watchfulness in order to perseverance in the duty of prayer. Watch and pray, saith Christ; which implies that we should watch unto prayer, as the Apostle Peter says, 1 Pet. iv. 7. It implies, that we should watch against a neglect of prayer, as well as against other sins. The apostle, in places which have been already mentioned, directs us to pray with all prayer, watching there unto with all perseverance, and to continue in prayer, and watch in the same. Nor is it any wonder that the apostles so much insisted on watching, in order to a continuance in prayer with all perseverance; for there are many temptations to neglect this duty; first to be inconstant in it, and from time to time to omit it; then in a great measure to neglect it. The devil watches to draw us away from God, and to hinder us from going to him in prayer. We are surrounded with one and another tempting object, business, and diversion: Particularly we meet with many things which are great temptations to a neglect of this duty.

3. To move you to persevere in the duty of prayer, consider how much you always stand in need of the help of God. If persons who have formerly attended this duty, leave it off, the language of it is, that now they stand in no further need of God's help, that they have no further occasion to go to God with requests and supplications: When indeed it is in God we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot draw a breath without his help. You need his help every day, for the supply of your outward wants; and especially you stand in continual need of him to help your souls. Without his protection they would immediately fall into the hands of the devil, who always stands as a roaring lion, ready, whenever he is permitted, to fall upon the souls of men and devour them. If God should indeed preserve your lives, but should otherwise forsake and leave you to yourselves, you would be most miserable: Your lives would be a curse to you.

Those that are converted, if God should forsake them, would soon fall away totally from a state of grace into a state more miserable than ever they were in before their conversion. They have no strength of their own to resist those powerful enemies who surround them. Sin and Satan would immediately carry them away, as a mighty flood, if God should forsake them. You stand in need of daily supplies from God. Without God you can receive no spiritual light nor comfort, can exercise no grace, can bring forth no fruit. Without God your souls will wither and pine away, and sink into a most wretched state. You continually need the instructions and directions of God. What can a little child do, in a vast howling wilderness, without some one to guide it, and to lead it in the right way? Without God you will soon fall into snares, and pits, and many fatal calamities.

Seeing therefore you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it of him, and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon him, by resorting to him, to spread your needs before him, and to offer up your requests to him in prayer. Let us consider how miserable we should be, if we should leave off prayer, and God at the same time should leave off to take any care of us, or to afford us any more supplies of his grace. By our constancy in prayer, we cannot be profitable to God; and if we leave it off,

God will sustain no damage: He doth not need our prayers; Job x. 6, 7. But if God cease to care for us and to help us, we immediately sink: We can do nothing: We can receive nothing without him.

4. Consider the great benefit of a constant, diligent, and persevering attendance on this duty. It is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper. It is an excellent mean of keeping up an acquaintance with God, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is the way to a life of communion with God. It is an excellent mean of taking off the heart from the vanities of the world and of causing the mind to be conversant in heaven. It is an excellent preservative from sin and the wiles of the devil, and a powerful antidote against the poison of the old serpent. It is a duty whereby strength is derived from God against the lusts and corruptions of the heart, and the snares of the world.

It hath a great tendency to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works, as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven And if the duty be constantly and diligently attended, it will be a very pleasant duty. Slack and slothful attendance upon it, and unsteadiness in it, are the causes which make it so great a burden as it is to some persons. Their slothfulness in it hath naturally the effect to beget a dislike of the duty and a great indisposition to it. But if it be constantly and diligently attended, it is one of the best means of leading not only a Christian and amiable, but also a pleasant life; a life of much sweet fellowship with Christ, and of the abundant enjoyment of the light of his countenance.

Besides, the great power which prayer, when duly attended, hath with God, is worthy of your notice. By it men become like Jacob, who, as a prince, had power with God, and prevailed, when he wrestled with God for the blessing. See the power of prayer represented in James v. 16,18. By these things you may be sensible how much you will lose, if you shall be negligent of this great duty of calling upon God; and how ill you will consult your own interest by such a neglect.

I conclude my discourse with two directions in order to constancy and perseverance in this duty.

1. Watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practiced this duty, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, or company, or diversion hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes. They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way, that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it pretty frequently so happens, that they have something to hinder, something which they call a just excuse. After a while, a less thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more of an habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it. And even when he doth perform it, it is in such a poor, dull, heartless, miserable manner, that he says to himself, he might as well not do it at all, as do it so. Thus he makes his own dullness and indisposition an excuse for wholly neglecting it, or at least for living in a great measure in the neglect of it. After this manner do Satan and men's own corruptions inveigle them to their ruin.

Therefore beware of the first beginnings of a neglect: Watch against temptations to it: Take heed how you begin to allow of excuses. Be watchful to keep up the duty in the height of it; let it not so much as begin to sink. For when you give way, though it be but little, it is like giving way to an enemy in the field of battle; the first beginning of a retreat greatly encourages the enemy, and weakens the retreating soldiers.

2. Let me direct you to forsake all such practices as you find by experience do indispose you to the duty of secret prayer. Examine the things in which you have allowed yourselves, and inquire whether they have had this effect. You are able to look over your past behavior, and may doubtless, on an impartial consideration, make a judgment of the practices and courses in which you have allowed yourselves.

Particularly let young people examine their manner of company keeping, and the round of diversions in which, with their companions, they have allowed themselves. I only desire that you would ask at the mouth of your own consciences what has been the effect of these things with respect to your attendance on the duty of secret prayer. Have you not found that such practices have tended to the neglect of this duty? Have you not found that after them you have been more indisposed to it, and less conscientious and careful to attend it? Yea have they not from, time to time, actually been the means of your neglecting it?

If you cannot deny that this is really the case, then, if you seek the good of your souls, forsake these practices. Whatever you may plead for them, as that there is no hurt in them, or that there is a time for all things, and the like; yet if you find this hurt in the consequence of them, it is time for you to forsake them. And if you value heaven more than a little worldly diversion; if you set an higher price on eternal glory than on a dance or a song, you will forsake them.

If these things be lawful in themselves, yet if your experience show, that they are attended with such a consequence as I have now mentioned, that is enough. It is lawful in itself for you to enjoy your right hand and your right eye: But if, by experience, you find they cause you to offend, it is time for you to cut off the one, and pluck out the other, as you would rather go to heaven without them than go to hell with them, into that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

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The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God

"O thou that hears prayer." **-- Psalm 65:2**

This psalm seems to be written, either as a psalm of praise to God for some remarkable answer of prayer, in the bestowment of some public mercy, or else on occasion of some special faith and confidence which David had that his prayer would be answered. It is probable that this mercy bestowed, or expected to be bestowed, was some great public mercy for which David had been very earnest and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer. And that he had vowed to God that if he would grant him his request he would render him praise and glory. — This seems to be the reason why he expresses himself as he does in the first verse of the psalm, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed," i.e. that praise which I have vowed to give thee, on the answer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as soon as thou shalt have answered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee shall be performed.

In the verse of the text, there is a prophecy of the glorious times of the gospel, when "all flesh shall come" to the true God, as to *the God who heareth prayer*, which is here mentioned as what distinguishes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and sought, those gods who cannot hear, and cannot answer their prayer. The time was coming when all flesh should come to that God who *doth hear prayer*. — Hence we gather this doctrine, *that it is the character of the Most High, that he is a God who hears prayer*.

I shall handle this point in the following method:

I. Show that the Most High is a God that hears prayer.

II. That he is eminently such a God.

III. That herein he is distinguished for all false gods.

IV. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

I. The Most High is a God that hears prayer. Though he is infinitely above all and stands in no need of creatures, yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the dust. He manifests and presents himself as the object of prayer, appears as sitting on a mercy-seat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they stand in need of anything, he allows them to come, and ask it of him, and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his Word hath given many promises that he will hear their prayers. The Scripture is full of such examples, and in his dispensations towards his church, manifests himself to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired what is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

First, his *accepting* the supplications of those who pray to him. Their address to him is well taken, he is well-pleased with it. He approves of their asking such mercies as they request of him and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him. He accepts the honor they do him in prayer.

Second, he *acts* agreeably to his acceptance. He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency, which he makes to them *in prayer*, or immediately after. While they are praying, he gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty, and enables them, with great quietness, to rest in him, to leave themselves and their prayers with him, submitting to his will and trusting in his grace and faithfulness. Such a manifestation God seems to have made of himself in prayer to *Hannah*, which quieted and composed her mind, and took away her sadness. We read (1 Sam. 1) how earnest she was, and how exercised in her mind, and that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. But she came and poured out her soul before God, and spake out of the abundance of her complaint

and grief. Then we read that she went away and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, verse 18, which seems to have been from some refreshing discoveries which God had made of himself to her, to enable her quietly to submit to his will and trust in his mercy, whereby God manifested his acceptance of her. — Not that I conclude persons can hence argue, that the particular thing which they ask will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretell from it what God will do in answer to their prayers, any further than he has promised in his Word. Yet God may, and doubtless does, thus testify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently rest in his providence [and] in his merciful ordering and disposing, with respect to the thing which they ask. Again, God manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by *doing* for them agreeably to their needs and supplications. He not only inwardly and spiritually discovers his mercy to their souls by his Spirit, but outwardly by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in consequence of their prayers, and by causing an agreeableness between his providence and their prayers. — I proceed now,

II. To show that the Most High is *eminently* a God that hears prayer. This appears in several things.

First, in his giving such *free access* to him by prayer. God in his Word manifests himself ready at all times to allow us this privilege. He sits on a throne of grace, and there is no veil to hide this throne and keep us from it. The veil is rent from the top to the bottom. The way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we please. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldness. Heb. 4:14, 16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” How wonderful is it that such worms as we should be allowed to come boldly at all times to so great a God! — Thus God indulges all kinds of persons, of all nations. 1 Cor. 1:2, 3, “unto all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; grace be unto you,” etc. Yea, God allows the most vile and unworthy: the greatest sinners are allowed to come through Christ. And he not only allows, but encourages and frequently invites them, yea, manifests himself as delighting in being sought to by

prayer. Pro. 15:8, “The prayer of the upright is his delight;” and in the Song 2:14, we have Christ saying to the spouse, “O my dove, let me hear they voice; for sweet is they voice.” The voice of the saints in prayer is sweet unto Christ, he delights to hear it. He allows them to be earnest and importunate, yea, to the degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no rest, and even encouraging them so to do. Isa. 62:6, 7, “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest.” Thus Christ encourages us, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge, Luke 18. So, in the parable of the man who went to his friend at midnight, Luke 11:5, etc.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him, yea, to be resolute in it, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” It is noticed with approbation when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven and take it by force. Thus Christ suffered the blind man to be most importunate and unceasing in his cries to him, Luke 18:38, 39. He continued crying, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Others who were present rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, looking upon it as too great a boldness and an indecent behavior towards Christ, thus to cry after him as he passed by. But Christ did not rebuke him, but stood and commanded him to be brought unto him, saying, “What wilt thou that I should do to thee?” And when the blind man had told him, Christ graciously granted his request. — The freedom of access that God gives, appears also in allowing us to come to him by prayer for everything we need, both temporal and spiritual, whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain. Phil. 4:6, “Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”

Second, that God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer *so readily*. He often manifests his readiness to hear prayer, by giving an answer so speedily, sometimes while they are yet speaking, and sometimes before they pray, when they only have a design of praying. So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the first purpose of praying, and sometimes bestows mercy thereupon. Isa. 65:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” We read, that when Daniel was making humble

and earnest supplication, God sent an angel to comfort him and to assure him of an answer, Dan. 9:20-24. When God defers for the present to answer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardness to answer, but for the good of his people sometimes, that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or because another time would be the best and fittest on some other account. And even then, when God seems to delay an answer, the answer is indeed hastened, as in Luke 18:7, 8, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes, when the blessing seems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the best time and the best manner. Hab. 2:3, "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry.

Third, that the Most High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving so *liberally* in answer to prayer. Jam. 1:5, 6, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often show their backwardness to give, both by the scantiness of their gifts and by upbraiding those who ask of them. They will be sure to put them in mind of some faults when they give them anything, but on the contrary, God both gives liberally and upbraids us not with our undeservings. He is plenteous and rich in his communications to those who call upon him. Psa. 86:5, "For those art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee." And Rom. 10:12, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." — Sometimes, God not only gives the thing asked, but he gives them more than is asked. So he did to Solomon. 1 Kin. 3:12, 13, "Behold, I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee, before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either ask or think, as is implied in Eph. 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Fourth, that God is eminently of this character appears by the *greatness* of the things which he has often done in answer to prayer. Thus, when

Esau, was coming out against his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubtfully resolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed and God turned the heart of Esau, so that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner, Gen. 32. So in Egypt, at the prayers of Moses, God brought those dreadful plagues, and at his prayer removed them again. When Samson was ready to perish with thirst, he prayed to God, and he brought water out of a dry jaw-bone, for his supply, Jdg. 15:18, 19. And when he prayed, after his strength was departed from him, God strengthened him, so as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines: so that those whom he slew at his death were more than all those whom he slew in his life. — Joshua prayed to God, and said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." And God heard his prayer and caused the sun and moon to stand still accordingly. The prophet "Elijah was a man of like passion" with us, "and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought for her fruit;" as the apostle James observes, Jam. 5:17, 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah, the Ethiopian, of a thousand thousand, in answer to the prayer of Asa, 2 Chr. 14:9, etc. And God sent an angel and slew in one night an hundred and eighty-five thousand men of Sennacherib's army, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kin. 19:14-16, 19, 35.

Fifth, this truth appears, in that God is, as it were, *overcome* by prayer. When God is displeased by sin, he manifests his displeasure, comes out against us in his providence, and seems to oppose and resist us. In such cases, God is, speaking after the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," Jam. 5:16. It has a great power in it: such a prayer-hearing God is the Most High, that he graciously manifests himself as conquered by it. Thus God appeared to oppose Jacob in what he sought of him. Yet Jacob was resolute and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Israel, for says he, "as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," Gen. 32:28. A mighty prince indeed! Hos 12:4, "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; He wept and made supplication unto him." — When his anger was provoked against Israel, and he appeared to be ready to consume them in his hot

displeasure, Moses stood in the gap, and by his humbled and earnest prayer and supplication, averted the stroke of divine vengeance, Exo. 32:9, etc. Num. 14:11, etc.

III. Herein the most high God is *distinguished* from false gods. The true God is the only one of this character. There is no other of whom it may be said, that *he heareth prayer*.

Many of those things that are worshipped as gods are idols made by their worshippers: mere stocks and stones that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears, but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them. They have eyes, but they see not, etc. Psa. 115:5, 6. — Others, though not the work of men's hands, yet are things *without life*. Thus, many worship the sun, moon, and stars, which though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing anything of the wants and desires of those who pray to them. — Some worship certain kinds of *animals*, as the Egyptians were wont to worship bulls, which though not without life, yet are destitute of that reason whereby they would be capable of knowing the requests of their worshippers. Others worship *devils* instead of the true God. 1 Cor. 10:20, "but I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils." These, though beings of great power, have not knowledge necessary to capacitate them fully to understand the state, circumstances, necessities, and desires of those who pray to them. But the true God perfectly knows the circumstances of everyone that prays to him throughout the world. Though millions pray to him at once, in different parts of the world, it is no more difficult for him who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all than of one alone. God is so perfect in knowledge, that he does not need to be informed by us in order to a knowledge of our wants, for he know what things we need before we ask him. The worshippers of false gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, lest their gods should fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bid the worshippers of Baal [to] do, 1 Kin. 18:27. But the true God hears the silent petitions of his people. He needs not that we should cry aloud: yea, he knows and perfectly understands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. 1:13.

Idols are but vanities and lies: in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing. As the apostle says, 1 Cor. 8:4, “An idol is nothing in the world.” As to images, they are so far from having power to answer prayer, that they are not able to act, “They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat.” They, therefore, that make them and pray to them, are senseless and sottish, and make themselves, as it were, stocks and stones, like unto them: Psa. 115:7, 8, and Jer. 10:5. “They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil; neither also is it in them to do good.” As to the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars: although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act only by necessity of nature. Therefore they have no power to do anything in answer to prayers. And devils, though worshipped as gods, are not able, if they had disposition, to make those happy who worship them, and [they] can do nothing at all but by divine permission and as subject to the disposal of Divine Providence. When the children of Israel departed from the true God to idols, and yet cried to him in their distress, he reproved them for their folly, by bidding them cry to the gods whom they had served, for deliverance in the time of their tribulation, Jos. 10:14. So God challenges those gods themselves. Isa. 41:23, 24, “Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you.” — These false gods, instead of helping those who pray to them, cannot help themselves. The devils are miserable tormented spirits. They are bound in chains of darkness for their rebellion against the true God and cannot deliver themselves. Nor have they any more disposition to help mankind than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And those that worship and pray to them get not their goodwill by serving them. All the reward that Satan will give them for the service which they do him, is to devour them. — I proceed now.

IV. To give the *reasons* of the doctrine, which I would do in answer to

these two inquires. First, why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies, and secondly, why God is so ready to hear prayers of men?

INQ. I. Why does God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies?

It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. He is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge, unchangeable. God never gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves, before we ask him. For though, speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes represented as if he were moved and persuaded by the prayers of his people. Yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers. For it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by anything in the creature. But the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only. He is self-moved, and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it, as Eze. 36:35, 37, "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer, to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy. And he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer. — When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of his intention to show mercy. Therefore, he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy: one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

First, with respect to *God*, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. As he has made all things for his own

glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures. And it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy, that we, when we desire to receive any mercy from him, should humbly supplicate the Divine Being. For the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honor paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

Second, with respect to *ourselves*, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same times earnest desires for it, whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with suitable confession, may excite a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek. And the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God, may make us sensible of his majesty, and in a sense fit to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

INQ. II. Why is God so ready to hear the prayers of men? — To this I answer,

First, because he is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that so great a God should be so ready to hear our prayers, though we are so despicable and unworthy. That he should give free access at all times to everyone, should allow us to be importunate without esteeming it an indecent boldness, [and] should be so rich in mercy to them that call upon him: that worms of the dust should have such power with God by prayer, that he should do such great things in answer to their prayers, and should show himself, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we consider the distance between God and us, and how we have provoked him by our sins, and how unworthy we are of the least gracious notice. It cannot be from any need

that God stands in of us, for our goodness extends not to him. Neither can it be from anything in us to incline the heart of God to us. It cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescension. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other Gods. He is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.

Second, we have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may he heard consistently with the honor of God's justice and majesty. Not only has God in himself mercy sufficient for this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exercised consistently with the divine honor. Through him we may come to God for mercy. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

1. He hath by his blood made *atonement* for sin, so that our guilt need not stand in the way, as a separating wall between God and us, and that our sins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot pass. By his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no Mediator, but the way to the mercy-seat would have been blocked up. But Christ hath removed whatever stood in the way. The veil which was before the mercy-seat "is rent from the top to the bottom" by the death of Christ. If it had not been for this, our guilt would have remained as a wall of brass to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. 10:17, etc.

2. Christ, by his obedience, has *purchased* this privilege, viz. that the prayers of those who believe in him should be heard. He has not only removed the obstacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them. His merits are the incense that is offered with the prayers of the saints, which renders them a sweet savor to God, and acceptable in his sight. Hence the prayers of the saints have such power with God. Hence at the prayer of a poor worm of the dust, God stopped the sun in his course for about the space of a whole day. Hence Jacob as a prince had power with God, and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Christ.

3. Christ enforces the prayers of his people, by his *intercession* at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incense which he hath provided, and there he makes continual intercession for all that come to God in his name, so that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may so say, which is represented in Rev. 8:3, 4, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand." — This was typified of old by the priest's offering incense in the temple, at the time when the people were offering up their prayers to God, as Luke 1:10, "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."

APPLICATION

Hence we may learn how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege. Whatever their necessities are, whatever their calamities or sorrows, they have no prayer-hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worship, and cry to them ever so earnestly, it will be in vain. They worship either lifeless things that can neither help them nor know that they need help, or wicked cruel spirits, who are their enemies, and wish nothing but their misery, and who, instead of helping them, are from day to day working their ruin and watching over them as a hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we distinguished from them, in that we have the true God made known to us: a God of infinite grace and mercy, a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and to give us all the relief which we need, a God who delights in mercy and is rich unto all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy Word of this same God,

to direct us how to seek for mercy! And whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go to him with confidence and great encouragement. What a comfort may this be to us! And what reason have we to rejoice in our privileges, to prize them so highly, and to bless God that he hath been so merciful to us, as to give us his Word, and reveal himself to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to stocks and stones, and devils, as he has left many thousands of others.

OBJECTION. I have often prayed to God for certain mercies, and he has not heard my prayers. — To this I answer,

I. It is no argument, that God is not a prayer-hearing God, if he give not to men *what they ask* of him to consume upon their lusts. Oftentimes when men pray for temporal good things, they desire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or sensuality. If they pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly spirit and make an idol of the world, it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers. Jam. 4:3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." If you request him to give you something of which you will make an idol, and set up in opposition to him — or will use as weapons of warfare against him, or as instruments to serve his enemies — no wonder that God will not hear you. If God should hear such prayers, he would act as his own enemy, inasmuch as he would bestow them to serve his enemies.

II. It is no argument that God is not a prayer-hearing God, that he heareth not *insincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that he should have any respect to that which has no sincerity in it? God looketh not at words, but at the heart; and it is fit that he should do so. If men pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? And why should that God who searches the heart, and tries the reins, have any respect of them? — Sometimes men do nothing but dissemble in their prayers. And when they do so, it is no argument that God is the less a prayer-hearing God, that he doth not hear such prayers, for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes they pray for that in words which they really desire not in their hearts, as that he would purge them from sin, when at the same time they show by their practice, that they do not desire to be purged from sin, while they love and choose it and are utterly averse to parting with it. In like manner, they often dissemble in the

pretense and show, which they make in their prayers, of dependence on God for mercies, and of a sense of his sufficiency to supply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for such and such things, there is a show that we are sensible we are dependent on him for them, and that he is sufficient to give them to us. But men sometimes seem to pray, while not sensible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him sufficient to supply them. For all the while they trust in themselves, and have no confidence in God. — They show in words as though they were beggars, but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words they seem to ask for things as the fruit of free grace. But in heart they account it would be hard, unjust, and cruel, if God should deny them. In words they seem humble and submissive, but in heart they are proud and contentious. There is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the less a prayer-hearing God, that he distinguishes, as an all-seeing God, between real prayers and pretend ones. Such prayers as those which I have just now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name in the eyes of him who searches the heart and sees things as they are. — That prayer which is not *of faith* is insincere, for prayer is a show or manifestation of dependence on God and trust in his sufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this trust or *faith* is wanting, there is no prayer in the sight of God. And however God is sometimes pleased to grant the requests of those who have no faith, yet he has not obliged himself so to do. Nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer-hearing God, when he hears them not.

III. It is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, that he exercises *his own wisdom* as to the time and manner of answering prayer. Some of God's people are sometimes ready to think that he does not hear their prayers, because he does [not] answer them at times when they expected, when indeed God hears them, and will answer them, in the time and way to which his own wisdom directs. — The business of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wise and needs not any of our direction, who knows what is best for us ten thousand times better that we, and knows what time and what way are best. It is fit that he should answer prayer, and as an infinitely wise God in the exercise of his own wisdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in answering our

requests. But a child is not to expect that the father's wisdom be subject to his, nor ought he to desire it, but should esteem it a privilege, that the parent will provide for him according to his *own* wisdom.

As to particular temporal blessings for which we pray, it is no argument that he is not a prayer-hearing God, because he bestows them not upon us. For it may be that God sees the things for which we pray not to be best for us. If so, it would be no mercy in him to bestow them upon us, but a judgment. Such things, therefore, ought always to be asked with submission to the divine will. God can answer prayer, though he bestow not the very thing for which we pray. He can sometimes better answer the lawful desires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happiness, God can perhaps better answer that end in bestowing something else than in the bestowment of that very thing which we ask And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is answered, though not in the bestowment of the individual thing which we sought. And so that may still be true which was before asserted, *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH. God never once failed of hearing a *sincere* and *believing* prayer; and those promises forever hold good, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Another use of this doctrine may be of reproof to those that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy so great a privilege as to have the prayer-hearing God revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcusableness if we neglect the privilege, or make no use of it, and deprive ourselves of the advantage by not seeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of secret prayer, which is more expressly required in the Word of God than any other kind. What account can those persons give of themselves, who neglect so known a duty? It is impossible that any among us should be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedness who live in the neglect of this duty! And what can they answer to their Judge, when he shall call them to an account for it?

Here I shall briefly say something to an EXCUSE which some may be

ready to make for themselves. Some may be ready to say *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, because I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

This excuses not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command shall come. God not only directs godly persons to pray, but others also. In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, God directs all persons to cry after wisdom and to lift up their voices for understanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God. And in Jam. 1:5, the apostle says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." And Peter directed *Simon Magus* to repent and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts 8:22. Therefore when God says, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuses, but we must do the thing required. Besides,

God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers for their goodness or acceptableness, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none. Nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers. Yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites (Jonah 3) and the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kin. 21:27, 28. Though there be no regard to God in their prayers yet he, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. He may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens when they cry, Psa. 147:9. And as he opens his bountiful hand and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psa. 145:16. Besides the prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

Finally, seeing we have such a prayer-hearing God as we have heard, let us be much employed in the duty of prayer. Let us pray with all prayer and supplication. Let us live prayerful lives, continuing instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance. Praying always, without ceasing, earnestly, and not fainting.

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The Resolutions

BEING SENSIBLE THAT I AM UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT GOD' S HELP, I DO HUMBLY ENTREAT HIM BY HIS GRACE TO ENABLE ME TO KEEP THESE RESOLUTIONS, SO FAR AS THEY ARE AGREEABLE TO HIS WILL, FOR CHRIST' S SAKE.

Remember to read over these Resolutions once a week.

1. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God' s glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I meet with, how many soever, and how great soever.

2. Resolved, to be continually endeavoring to find out some new contrivance and invention to promote the aforementioned things.

3. Resolved, if ever I shall fall and grow dull, so as to neglect to keep any part of these Resolutions, to repent of all I can remember, when I come to myself again.

4. Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God; nor be, nor suffer it, if I can avoid it.

5. Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

6. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.

7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

8. Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God. July 30.

9. Resolved, to think much on all occasions of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.

10. Resolved, when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom, and of hell.

11. Resolved, when I think of any theorem in divinity to be solved, immediately to do what I can towards solving it, if circumstances do not hinder.

12. Resolved, if I take delight in it as a gratification of pride, or vanity, or on any such account, immediately to throw it by.

13. Resolved, to be endeavoring to find out fit objects of charity and liberality.

14. Resolved, never to do any thing out of revenge.

15. Resolved, never to suffer the least motions of anger towards irrational beings.

16. Resolved, never to speak evil of anyone, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.

17. Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

18. Resolved, to live so, at all times, as I think is best in my devout frames, and when I have clearest notions of things of the gospel, and another world.

19. Resolved, never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if I expected it would not be above an hour, before I should hear the last

trump.

20. Resolved, to maintain the strictest temperance, in eating and drinking.

21. Resolved, never to do any thing, which if I should see in another, I should count a just occasion to despise him for, or to think any way the more meanly of him. (Resolutions 1 through 21 written in one setting in New Haven in 1722)

22. Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of.

23. Resolved, frequently to take some deliberate action, which seems most unlikely to be done, for the glory of God, and trace it back to the original intention, designs and ends of it; and if I find it not to be for God' s glory, to repute it as a breach of the 4th Resolution.

24. Resolved, whenever I do any conspicuously evil action, to trace it back, till I come to the original cause; and then, both carefully endeavor to do so no more, and to fight and pray with all my might against the original of it.

25. Resolved, to examine carefully, and constantly, what that one thing in me is, which causes me in the least to doubt of the love of God; and to direct all my forces against it.

26. Resolved, to cast away such things, as I find do abate my assurance.

27. Resolved, never willfully to omit any thing, except the omission be for the glory of God; and frequently to examine my omissions.

28. Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.

29. Resolved, never to count that a prayer, nor to let that pass as a prayer,

nor that as a petition of a prayer, which is so made, that I cannot hope that God will answer it; nor that as a confession, which I cannot hope God will accept.

30. Resolved, to strive to my utmost every week to be brought higher in religion, and to a higher exercise of grace, than I was the week before.

31. Resolved, never to say any thing at all against any body, but when it is perfectly agreeable to the highest degree of Christian honor, and of love to mankind, agreeable to the lowest humility, and sense of my own faults and failings, and agreeable to the golden rule; often, when I have said anything against anyone, to bring it to, and try it strictly by the test of this Resolution.

32. Resolved, to be strictly and firmly faithful to my trust, that that, in Proverbs 20:6, A faithful man who can find? may not be partly fulfilled in me.

33. Resolved, to do always, what I can towards making, maintaining, and preserving peace, when it can be done without overbalancing detriment in other respects. Dec. 26, 1722.

34. Resolved, in narrations never to speak any thing but the pure and simple verity.

35. Resolved, whenever I so much question whether I have done my duty, as that my quiet and calm is thereby disturbed, to set it down, and also how the question was resolved. Dec. 18, 1722.

36. Resolved, never to speak evil of any, except I have some particular good call for it. Dec. 19, 1722.

37. Resolved, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent,- what sin I have committed,-and wherein I have denied myself;-also at the end of every week, month and year. Dec. 22 and 26, 1722.

38. Resolved, never to speak anything that is ridiculous, sportive, or matter of laughter on the Lord' s day. Sabbath evening, Dec. 23, 1722.

39. Resolved, never to do any thing of which I so much question the lawfulness of, as that I intend, at the same time, to consider and examine afterwards, whether it be lawful or not; unless I as much question the lawfulness of the omission.

40. Resolved, to inquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking. Jan. 7, 1723.

41. Resolved, to ask myself, at the end of every day, week, month and year, wherein I could possibly, in any respect, have done better. Jan. 11, 1723.

42. Resolved, frequently to renew the dedication of myself to God, which was made at my baptism; which I solemnly renewed, when I was received into the communion of the church; and which I have solemnly re-made this twelfth day of January, 1722-23.

43. Resolved, never, henceforward, till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God' s; agreeable to what is to be found in Saturday, January 12, 1723.

44. Resolved, that no other end but religion, shall have any influence at all on any of my actions; and that no action shall be, in the least circumstance, any otherwise than the religious end will carry it. January 12, 1723.

45. Resolved, never to allow any pleasure or grief, joy or sorrow, nor any affection at all, nor any degree of affection, nor any circumstance relating to it, but what helps religion. Jan. 12 and 13, 1723.

46. Resolved, never to allow the least measure of any fretting uneasiness at my father or mother. Resolved to suffer no effects of it, so much as in the least alteration of speech, or motion of my eye: and to be especially careful of it with respect to any of our family.

47. Resolved, to endeavor, to my utmost, to deny whatever is not most agreeable to a good, and universally sweet and benevolent, quiet,

peaceable, contented and easy, compassionate and generous, humble and meek, submissive and obliging, diligent and industrious, charitable and even, patient, moderate, forgiving and sincere temper; and to do at all times, what such a temper would lead me to; and to examine strictly, at the end of every week, whether I have done so. Sabbath morning. May 5, 1723.

48. Resolved, constantly, with the utmost niceness and diligence, and the strictest scrutiny, to be looking into the state of my soul, that I may know whether I have truly an interest in Christ or not; that when I come to die, I may not have any negligence respecting this to repent of. May 26, 1723.

49. Resolved, that this never shall be, if I can help it.

50. Resolved, I will act so as I think I shall judge would have been best, and most prudent, when I come into the future world. July 5, 1723.

51. Resolved, that I will act so, in every respect, as I think I shall wish I had done, if I should at last be damned. July 8, 1723.

52. I frequently hear persons in old age, say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: Resolved, that I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age. July 8, 1723.

53. Resolved, to improve every opportunity, when I am in the best and happiest frame of mind, to cast and venture my soul on the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust and confide in him, and consecrate myself wholly to him; that from this I may have assurance of my safety, knowing that I confide in my Redeemer. July 8, 1723.

54. Whenever I hear anything spoken in conversation of any person, if I think it would be praiseworthy in me, Resolved to endeavor to imitate it. July 8, 1723.

55. Resolved, to endeavor to my utmost to act as I can think I should do, if, I had already seen the happiness of heaven, and hell torments. July 8, 1723.

56. Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with

my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.

57. Resolved, when I fear misfortunes and adversities, to examine whether I have done my duty, and resolve to do it, and let the event be just as providence orders it. I will as far as I can, be concerned about nothing but my duty, and my sin. June 9, and July 13 1723.

58. Resolved, not only to refrain from an air of dislike, fretfulness, and anger in conversation, but to exhibit an air of love, cheerfulness and benignity. May 27, and July 13, 1723.

59. Resolved, when I am most conscious of provocations to ill nature and anger, that I will strive most to feel and act good-naturedly; yea, at such times, to manifest good nature, though I think that in other respects it would be disadvantageous, and so as would be imprudent at other times. May 12, July 11, and July 13.

60. Resolved, whenever my feelings begin to appear in the least out of order, when I am conscious of the least uneasiness within, or the least irregularity without, I will then subject myself to the strictest examination. July 4, and 13, 1723.

61. Resolved, that I will not give way to that listlessness which I find unbends and relaxes my mind from being fully and fixedly set on religion, whatever excuse I may have for it-that what my listlessness inclines me to do, is best to be done, etc. May 21, and July 13, 1723.

62. Resolved, never to do anything but duty, and then according to Ephesians 6:6-8, to do it willingly and cheerfully as unto the Lord, and not to man: knowing that whatever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord. June 25 and July 13, 1723.

63. On the supposition, that there never was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, who was properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true luster, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part and under whatever character viewed: Resolved, to act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one, who should live in my time. January 14

and July 13, 1723.

64. Resolved, when I find those ‹groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26), of which the Apostle speaks, and those breakings of soul for the longing it hath, of which the Psalmist speaks, Psalm 119:20, that I will promote them to the utmost of my power, and that I will not be weary of earnestly endeavoring to vent my desires, nor of the repetitions of such earnestness. July 23, and August 10, 1723.

65. Resolved, very much to exercise myself in this, all my life long, viz. with the greatest openness, of which I am capable of, to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him: all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, and every thing, and every circumstance; according to Dr. Manton' s 27th Sermon on Psalm 119. July 26, and Aug.10 1723.

66. Resolved, that I will endeavor always to keep a benign aspect, and air of acting and speaking in all places, and in all companies, except it should so happen that duty requires otherwise.

67. Resolved, after afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them, what am I the better for them, and what I might have got by them.

68. Resolved, to confess frankly to myself all that which I find in myself, either infirmity or sin; and, if it be what concerns religion, also to confess the whole case to God, and implore needed help. July 23, and August 10, 1723.

69. Resolved, always to do that, which I shall wish I had done when I see others do it. August 11, 1723.

70. Let there be something of benevolence, in all that I speak. August 17, 1723.

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The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." **-- 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2**

Subject: That it is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be the day that should be especially set apart for religious exercises and duties among Christians.

We find in the New Testament often mentioned a certain collection, which was made by the Grecian churches, for the brethren in Judea, who were reduced to pinching want by a dearth which then prevailed, and was the heavier upon them by reason of their circumstances, they having been from the beginning oppressed and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews. This collection or contribution is twice mentioned in the Acts, 11:28-30 and 24:17. It is also noticed in several of the epistles: as Rom. 15:26 and Gal. 2:10. But it is most largely insisted on, in these two epistles to the Corinthians: in this first epistle, 16, and in the second epistle, 8 and 9. The apostle begins the directions, which in this place he delivers concerning this matter, with the words of the text — wherein we may observe,

I. What is the thing to be done concerning which the apostle gives them direction — the exercise and manifestation of their charity towards their brethren — by communicating to them for the supply of their wants, which was by Christ and his apostles often insisted on, as one main duty of the Christian religion and is expressly declared to be so by the apostle James, chap. 1:27, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

II. We may observe the time on which the apostle directs that this should be done, *viz.* “on the first day of the week.” By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he insists upon it, that it be done on such a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that, or were so proper and fit

a time for such a work. — Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days in gospel times, which the Jews made, as appears by Gal. 4:10, “Ye observe days, and months,” etc., yet here he gives the preference to one day of the week, before any other, for the performance of a certain great duty of Christianity.

III. It may be observed that the apostle had given to other churches, that were concerned in the same duty, to do it on the first day of the week: “As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.” Whence we may learn, that it was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the Christians at Corinth, which was the reason why the Holy ghost insisted that they should perform this duty *on this day* of the week. The apostle had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia.

Now Galatia was far distant from Corinth: the sea parted them, and there were several other countries between them. Therefore it cannot be thought that the Holy Ghost directs them to this time upon any *secular* account, having respect to some particular circumstances of the people in that city, but upon a *religious* account. In giving the preference to this day for such work, before any other day, he has respect to something which reached all Christians throughout the wide world.

And by other passages of the New Testament, we learn that the case was the same as to other exercises of religion, and that the first day of the week was preferred before any other day, in churches immediately under the care of the apostles, for an attendance on the exercises of religion in general. Acts 20:7, “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” It seems by these things to have been among the primitive Christians in the apostles’ days, with respect to the first day of the week, as it was among the Jews, with respect to the seventh.

We are taught by Christ, that the doing of alms and showing of mercy are proper works for the Sabbath-day. When the Pharisees found fault with Christ for suffering his disciples to pluck the ears of corn, and eat on the Sabbath, Christ corrects them with that saying, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice;” Mat. 12:7. And Christ teaches that works of mercy are proper to be done on the Sabbath, Luke 13:15, 16, and 14:5. — These works used to

be done on sacred festivals and days of rejoicing under the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah's and Esther's time, Neh. 8:10 and Est. 9:19, 22. — And Josephus and Philo, two very noted Jews, who wrote not long after Christ's time, give an account that it was the manner among the Jews on the Sabbath, to make collections for sacred and pious uses.

DOCTRINE

It is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians for religious exercises and duties.

That this is the doctrine which the Holy Ghost intended to teach us, by this and some other passages of the New Testament, I hope will appear plainly by the sequel. This is a doctrine that we have been generally brought up in by the instructions and examples of our ancestors, and it has been the general profession of the Christian world, that this day ought to be religiously observed and distinguished from other days of the week. However, some deny it. Some refuse to take notice of the day, as different from other days. Others own that it is a laudable custom of the Christian church, into which she fell by agreement and by appointment of her ordinary rulers, to set apart this day for public worship. But they deny any other original to such an observation of the day, than prudential human appointment. Others religiously observe the Jewish Sabbath, as of perpetual obligation, and that we want a foundation for determining that that is abrogated, and another day of the week is appointed in the room of the seventh.

All these classes of men say that there is no clear revelation that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be observed as a day to be set apart for religious exercises, in the room of the ancient Sabbath, which there ought to be in order to the observation of it by the Christian church as a divine institution. They say that we ought not to go upon the tradition of past ages, or upon uncertain and far-fetched inferences from some passages of the history of the New Testament, or upon some obscure and uncertain hints in the apostolic writings. But that we ought to expect a plain institution, which they say we may conclude God would have given us, if he had designed that the whole Christian church, in all ages, should observe another day of the week for a holy

Sabbath, than that which was appointed of old by plain and positive institution.

So far it is undoubtedly true that if this be the mind and will of God, he has not left the matter to human tradition, but has so revealed his mind about it, in his Word, that there is to be found good and substantial evidence that it is his mind. Doubtless, the revelation is plain enough for them that have ears to hear: that is for them that will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. No Christian, therefore, should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian Sabbath be of divine institution, it is doubtless of great importance to religion that it be well kept, and therefore, that every Christian be well acquainted with the institution.

If men take it only upon trust, and keep the first day of the week because their parents taught them so, or because they see others do it, they will never be likely to keep it so conscientiously and strictly, as if they had been convinced by seeing for themselves that there are good grounds in the Word of God for their practice. Unless they do see thus for themselves, whenever they are negligent in sanctifying the Sabbath or are guilty of profaning it, their consciences will not have that advantage to smite them for it, as otherwise they would. — And those who have a sincere desire to obey God in all things, will keep the Sabbath more carefully and more cheerfully, if they have seen and been convinced that therein they do what is according to the will and command of God, and what is acceptable to him. [They] will also have a great deal more comfort in the reflection upon their having carefully and painfully kept the Sabbath.

Therefore, I design now, by the help of God, to show that it is sufficiently revealed in the Scriptures, to be the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be distinguished in the Christian church from other days of the week, as a Sabbath, to be devoted to religious exercises.

In order to this, I shall here premise that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his Word, without a particular precept in so many express terms, enjoying it. The human understanding is the ear to which the Word of

God is spoken; and if it be so spoken, that *that* ear may plainly hear it, it is enough. God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but sufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is sufficient: whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes, or whether we see the thing that he would signify to us, by the eye of reason and understanding.

Who can positively say that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way, then there would have been some reason to say so. But God has given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God discovers his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience, and God may expect our notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.

I shall speak upon this subject under these two general propositions.

I. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations.

II. It is sufficiently clear, that under the gospel-dispensation, this day is the first day of the week.

I. Prop. It is sufficiently clear that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations: not only among the ancient Israelites, till Christ

came, but even in these gospel times and among all nations professing Christianity.

First, from the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind, and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in such circumstances as will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.

The state of mankind in this world is such that we are called to concern ourselves in secular business and affairs, which will necessarily, in a considerable degree, take up the thoughts and engage the attention of the mind. However, some particular persons may be in circumstances more free and disengaged. Yet the state of mankind is such that the bulk of them, in all ages and nations, are called ordinarily to exercise their thoughts about secular affairs, and to follow worldly business, which in its own nature, is remote from the solemn duties of religion.

It is therefore most meet and suitable that certain times should be set apart, upon which men should be required to throw by all other concerns: that their minds may be the more freely and entirely engaged in spiritual exercises in the duties of religion and in the immediate worship of God, and that their minds being disengaged from common concerns, their religion may not be mixed with them.

It is also suitable that these times should be fixed and settled, that the church may agree therein and that they should be the same for all, that men may not interrupt one another, but may rather assist one another by mutual example: for example has a great influence in such cases. If there be a time set apart for public rejoicing, and there be a general manifestation of joy, the general example seems to inspire men with a spirit of joy: one kindles another. So, if it be a time of mourning, and there be general appearances and manifestations of sorrow, it naturally

affects the mind: it disposes it to depression, it casts a gloom upon it, and does as it were dull and deaden the spirits. So, if a certain time be set apart as holy time, for general devotion and solemn religious exercises, a general example tends to render the spirit serious and solemn.

Second, without doubt, one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for this purpose. One proportion is more suitable to the state of mankind and will have a greater tendency to answer the ends of such times, than another. The times may be too far asunder. I think human reason is sufficient to discover that it would be too seldom for the purposes of such solemn times, that they should be but once a year. So, I conclude, nobody will deny but that such times may be too near together to agree with the state and necessary affairs of mankind.

Therefore, there can be no difficulty in allowing that some certain proportion of time, whether we can exactly discover it or not, is really fittest and best — considering the end for which such times are kept, and the condition, circumstances, and necessary affairs of men; and considering what the state of man is, taking one age and nation with another — more convenient and suitable than any other, which God may know and exactly determine, though we, by reason of the scantiness of our understandings, cannot.

As a certain frequency of the returns of these times may be more suitable than any other, so one length or continuance of the times themselves may be fitter than another, to answer the purposes of such times. If such times, when they come, were to last but an hour, it would not well answer the end. For then worldly things would crowd too nearly upon sacred exercises, and there would not be that opportunity to get the mind so thoroughly free and disengaged from other things, as there would be if the times were longer. Being so short, sacred and profane things would be as it were mixed together. Therefore, a certain distance between these times, and a certain continuance of them when they come, is more proper than others, which God knows and is able to determine, though perhaps we cannot.

Third, it is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be

of general use in determining this matter. It was written that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day and hallowing and blessing it, which he did before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he within himself might observe it: as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.

So much therefore must be intended by it, that it was his mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days and then rest and hallow or sanctify the next following: that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days. — So that it hence appears to be the mind and will of God that not only the Jews, but man in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven: which is the thing we are endeavoring to prove.

Fourth, the mind of God in this matter is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is there revealed, not only that the Israelitish nation, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy, or which is the same thing, one day after every six. This command, as well as the rest, is doubtless everlasting and of perpetual obligation, at least as to the substance of it, as is intimated by its being engraven on the tables of stone. Nor is it to be thought that Christ ever abolished any command of the ten, but that there is the complete number ten yet, and will be to the end of the world.

Some say, that the fourth command is perpetual, but not in its literal sense: not as designing any particular proportion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercises. They say that it stands in force only in a mystical sense, *viz.* as that weekly rest of the Jews typified spiritual rest in the Christian church, and that we under the gospel are not to make any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all time holy, doing everything in a spiritual manner.

But this is an absurd way of interpreting the command, as it refers to

Christians. For if the command be so far abolished, it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the command, to fix the time of worship. The first command fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner, the fourth the time. And if it stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behavior at all times, it does not remain as one of the ten commands, but as a summary of all the commands.

The main objection against the perpetuity of this command is that the duty required is not moral. Those laws whose obligations arises from the nature of things and from the general state and nature of mankind, as well as from God's positive revealed will, are called moral laws. Others, whose obligation depends merely upon God's positive and arbitrary institution, are not moral: such as the ceremonial laws, and the precepts of the gospel about the two sacraments. Now, the objectors say, they will allow all that is moral in the decalogue to be of perpetual obligation. But this command, they say, is not moral.

But this objection is weak and insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought, or to prove that the fourth command, as to the substance of it, is not of perpetual obligation. For,

1. If it should be allowed that there is no morality belonging to the command, and that the duty required is founded merely on arbitrary institution, it cannot therefore be certainly concluded that the command is not perpetual. We know that there may be commands in force under the gospel and to the end of the world, which are not moral. Such are the institutions of the two sacraments. And why may there not be positive commands in force in all ages of the church? If positive, arbitrary institutions are in force in gospel-times, what is there which concludes that no positive precept give before the times of the gospel can yet continue in force? But,

2. As we have observed already, the thing in general that there should be certain fixed parts of time set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore, there is as much reason that there should be a command of perpetual and universal

obligation about this, as about any other duty whatsoever. For if the thing in general, that there be a time fixed, be founded in the nature of things, there is consequent upon it a necessity, that the time be limited by a command. For there must be a proportion of time fixed, or else the general moral duty cannot be observed.

3. The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is also founded in the nature of things, only our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. We have observed already that without doubt one proportion of time is in itself fitter than another, and a certain continuance of time fitter than any other, considering the universal state and nature of mankind, which God may see, though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So that the difference between this command and others, does not lie in this (that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not), but only that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves. But this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation.

So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands. Only man's reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, so exactly to determine it. Though perhaps man's reason is sufficient to determine that it ought not to be much seldomer, nor much oftener, than once in seven days.

Fifth, God appears in his Word laying abundantly more weight on this precept concerning the Sabbath, than on any precept of the ceremonial law. It is in the decalogue, one of the ten commands, which were delivered by God with an audible voice. It was written with his own finger on the tables of stone in the mount, and was appointed afterwards to be written on the tables which Moses made. The keeping of the weekly Sabbath is spoken of by the prophets, as that wherein consists a great part of holiness of life, and is inserted among moral duties, Isa. 58:13, 14, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on

my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and fee thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Sixth, it is foretold that this command should be observed in gospel-times, as in Isa. 56 at the beginning, where the due observance of the Sabbath is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among moral duties. It is also mentioned as a duty that should be most acceptable to God from his people, even where the prophet is speaking of gospel-times, as in the foregoing chapter, and in the first verse of this chapter. And, in the third and fourth verses, the prophet is speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law in gospel-times, and particularly of that law, which forbids eunuchs to come into the congregation of the Lord. Yet, here the man is pronounced blessed, who keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, verse 2. And even in the very sentence where the eunuchs are spoken of as being free from the ceremonial law, they are spoken of as being yet under obligation to keep the Sabbath, and actually keeping it, as that which God lays great weight upon: "For thus saith the Lord, unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Besides, the strangers spoken of in the sixth and seventh verses, are the Gentiles, that should be called in the times of the gospel, as is evident by the last clause in the seventh, and by the eighth verse: "For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him." Yet it is represented here as their duty to keep the Sabbath: "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer."

Seventh, a further argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, we have in Mat. 24:20, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day." Christ is here speaking of the flight of the apostles and other Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea, just before their final destruction, as is manifest by the whole context, and especially by the 16th verse, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But this final destruction of Jerusalem was after the dissolution of the Jewish constitution, and after the Christian dispensation was fully set up. Yet, it is plainly implied in these words of our Lord, that even then Christians were bound to a strict observation of the Sabbath.

Thus I have shown that it is the will of God that every seventh day be devoted to rest and to religious exercises.

II. Prop. That it is the will of God that under the gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the first day of the week.

In order to the confirmation of this, let the following things be considered.

First, the words of the fourth commandment afford no objections against this being the day that should be the Sabbath, any more than against any other day. That this day, which according to the Jewish reckoning, is the first of the week, should be kept as a Sabbath, is no more opposite to any sentence or word of the fourth command, than that the seventh of the week should be the day. The words of the fourth command do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath. They merely determine, that we should rest and keep as a Sabbath every seventh day, or one day after every six. It says, "Six days thou shalt labour, and the seventh thou shalt rest;" which implies no more, than that after six days of labour, we shall upon the next to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And this we are obliged to do forever. But the words no way determine where those six days shall begin, and so where the rest or Sabbath shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth command how to reckon the time, *i.e.* where to begin and end it. But that is supposed to be determined otherwise.

The Jews did not know, by the fourth command, where to begin their six

days, and on which particular day to rest: this was determined by another precept. The fourth command does indeed suppose a particular day appointed; but it does not appoint any. It requires us to rest and keep holy a seventh day, one after every six of labor, which particular day God either had or should appoint. The particular day was determined for that nation in another place, *viz.* in Exo. 16:23-26, "And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake, today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a sabbath unto the Lord: today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none." This is the first place where we have any mention made of the Sabbath, from the first Sabbath on which God rested.

It seems that the Israelites, in the time of their bondage in Egypt, had lost the true reckoning of time by the days of the week, reckoning from the first day of the creation. They were slaves and in cruel bondage and had in a great measure forgotten the true religion. For we are told that they served the gods of Egypt. And it is not to be supposed that the Egyptians would suffer their slaves to rest from their work every seventh day. Now, they having remained in bondage for so long a time, had probably lost the weekly reckoning. Therefore, when God had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he made known to them the Sabbath, on the occasion and in the manner recorded in the text just now quoted. Hence, we read in Nehemiah that when God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, etc. he made known unto them his holy Sabbath, Neh. 9:14, "And madest known unto them the holy sabbath." To the same effect, we read din Eze. 20:10, 12, "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths."

But they never would have known where the particular day would have fallen by the fourth command. Indeed, the fourth command, as it was spoken to the Jews, did refer to their Jewish Sabbath. But that does not prove that the day was determined and appointed by it. The precept in the fourth command is to be taken generally of such a seventh day as God

should appoint, or had appointed. And because such a particular day had been already appointed for the Jewish church, therefore, as it was spoken to them, it did refer to that particular day. But this does not prove, but the same words refer to another appointed seventh day, now in the Christian church. The words of the fourth command may oblige the church, under different dispensations, to observe different appointed seventh days, as well as the fifth command may oblige different persons to honor different fathers and mothers.

The Christian Sabbath, in the sense of the fourth command, is as much the seventh day as the Jewish Sabbath, because it is kept after six days of labor as well as that. It is the seventh reckoning from the beginning of our first working-day, as well as that was the seventh from the beginning of their first working day. All the difference is that the seven days formerly began from the day after God's rest from the creation, and now they begin the day after that. It is no matter by what names the days are called: if our nation had, for instance, called Wednesday the first day of the week, it would have been all one as to this argument.

Therefore, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath, there is no change from the fourth command; but the change is from another law, which determined the beginning and ending of their working days. So that those words of the fourth command, *viz.* "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it." These words are not made insignificant to Christians, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath. They still remain in their full force as to that which is principally intended by them. They were designed to give us a reason why we are to word but six days at a time, and then rest on the seventh, because God has set us the example. And taken so, they remain still in as much force as ever they were. This is the reason still, as much as ever it was, why we may work but six days at a time. What is the reason that Christians rest every seventh, and not every eighth, or every ninth, or tenth day? It is because God worked six days and rested the seventh.

It is true, these words did carry something further in their meaning, as they were spoken to the Jews, and to the church before the coming of Christ. It was then also intended by them that the seventh day was to be

kept in commemoration of the work of creation. But this is no objection to the supposition that the words, as they relate to us, do not import all that they did, as they related to the Jews. For there are other words which were written upon those tables of stone with the ten commandments, which are known and allowed not to be of the same import, as they relate to us, and as they related to the Jews, *viz.* these words, in the preface to the ten commandments, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." — These words were written on the tables of stone with the rest, and are spoken to us, as well as to the Jews. They are spoken to all to whom the commandments themselves are spoken, for they are spoken as an enforcement of the commandments. But they do not now remain in all the signification which they had, as they respected the Jews. For we never were brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, except in a mystical sense. — The same may be said of those words which are inserted in the commandments themselves, Deu. 5:15, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God commanded thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day."

So that all the arguments of those who are against the Christian Sabbath, drawn from the fourth command, which are all their strength, come to nothing.

Second, that the ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for the keeping of a weekly Sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not any reason against it.

We read in Scripture of two creations, the old and the new, and these words of the fourth command are to be taken as of the same force to those who belong to the new creation, with respect to that new creation as they were to those who belonged to the old creation, with respect to that. We read that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the church of old were to commemorate that work. But when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, those that belong to this new heaven and new earth, by a like reason, are to commemorate the creation of their heaven and earth.

The Scriptures teach us to look upon the old creation as destroyed, and as it were annihilated by sin; or, as being reduced to a chaos again, without form and void, as it was at first. Jer. 4:22, 23, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have n knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void: and the heavens, and they had no light!" *i.e.* were reduced to the same state in which they were at first; the earth was without form and void, and there was no light, but darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The Scriptures further teach us to call the gospel-restoration and redemption, a creation of a new heaven and a new earth; Isa. 65:17, 18, "For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." And Isa. 51:16, "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people." And Isa. 66:22, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make," etc. — In these places we are not only told a new creation, or new heavens and a new earth, but we are told what is meant by it, *viz.* The gospel renovation, the making of Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, saying unto Zion, "Thou art my people," etc. The prophet, in all these places, is prophesying of the gospel-redemption.

The gospel-state is everywhere spoken of as a renewed state of things, wherein old things are passed away, and all things become new: we are said to be created unto Christ Jesus unto good works. All things are restored and reconciled whether in heaven or in earth, and God has caused light to shine out of darkness, as he did at the beginning. And the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Testament as the end of the world. — But we who belong to the gospel-church, belong to the new creation. Therefore there seems to be at least as much reason that we should commemorate the work of this creation, as that the members of the ancient Jewish church should commemorate the work of the old creation.

Third, there is another thing which confirms it (that the fourth command teaches God's resting from the new creation, as well as from the old), which is that the Scriptures expressly speak of the one as parallel with the other: *i.e.* Christ's resting from the work of redemption is expressly spoken of as being parallel with God's resting from the work of creation. Heb. 4:10, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Now Christ rested from his works when he rose from the dead, on the first day of the week. When he rose from the dead, then he finished his work of redemption. His humiliation was then at an end: he then rested and was refreshed. — When it is said, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;" in the original, it is, a *sabbatism,* or *the keeping of a Sabbath*: and this reason is given for it, "For he that entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." — These three things at least we are taught by these words:

1. To look upon Christ's rest from his work of redemption, as parallel with God's rest from the work of creation. For they are expressly compared together, as parallel one with the other.

2. They are spoken of as parallel, particularly in this respect, *viz.* the relation which they both have to the keeping of a Sabbath among God's people, or with respect to the influence which these two rests have as to sabbatizing in the church of God. For it is expressly with respect to this that they are compared together. Here is an evident reference to God's blessing and hallowing the day of his rest from the creation to be a Sabbath, and appointing a Sabbath of rest in imitation of him. For the apostle is speaking of this, verse 4, "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Thus far is evident, whatever the apostle has respect to by this keeping of a Sabbath by the people of God: whether it be a weekly sabbatizing on earth or a sabbatizing in heaven.

3. It is evident in these words that the preference is given to the latter rest, *viz.* the rest of our Savior from his works, with respect to the influence it should have or relation it bears, to the sabbatizing of the people of God, now under the gospel, evidently implied in the expression,

"There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God. For he that entered into his rest," etc. For in this sabbatism appointed in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, does not remain, but ceases, and that this new rest, in commemoration of Christ's resting from his works, remains in the room of it.

Fourth, the Holy Ghost has implicitly told us that the Sabbath which was instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel-times. Isa. 65:17, 18. There we are told that when God should create new heavens and a new earth, the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind. If this be so, it is not to be supposed that we are to keep a seventh part of time, on purpose to remember it, and call it to mind.

Let us understand this which way we will, it will not be well consistent with the keeping of one day in seven, in the gospel-church, principally for the remembrance and calling to mind of the old creation. If the meaning of the place be only this — that the old creation shall not be remembered nor come into mind in comparison with the *new*, that the *new* will be so much more remarkable and glorious, will so much more nearly concern us, so much more notice will taken of it, and it will be thought so much more worthy to be remembered and commemorated, that the other will not be remembered, nor come into mind — it is impossible that it should be more to our purpose. For then hereby the Holy Ghost teaches us, that the Christian church has much more reason to commemorate the new creation than the old; insomuch, that the old is worthy to be forgotten in comparison with it.

And as the old creation was no more to be remembered, nor come into mind; so, in the following verse, the church is directed forever to commemorate the new creation, "But be you glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;" *i.e.* Though you forget the old, yet forever to the end of the world, keep a remembrance of the new creation.

Fifth, it is an argument that the Jewish Sabbath was not to be perpetual, that the Jews were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. One reason why it was instituted was because

God thus delivered them, as we are expressly told, Deu. 5:15, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." Now can any person think that God would have all nations under the gospel, and to the end of the world, keep a day every week, which was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt?

Sixth, the Holy Ghost has implicitly told us that instituted memorials of the Jews' deliverance from Egypt should be no longer upheld in gospel-times, Jer. 16:14-15. The Holy Ghost, speaking of gospel-times, says, "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their own land." *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought, etc. i.e.* at least they shall keep up no more any public memorials of it.

If there be a Sabbath kept up in gospel-times, as we have shown there must be it is more just from these words to suppose that it should be as a memorial of that which is spoken of in the latter verse, *the bringing up of the children of Israel from the land of the north:* that is the redemption of Christ and his bringing home the elect, not only from Judea, but from the north, and from all quarters of the world. — See Isa. 43:16-20.

Seventh, it is no more than just to suppose that God intended to intimate to us that the Sabbath ought by Christians to be kept in commemoration of Christ's redemption, in that the Israelites were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, because that deliverance out of Egypt is an evident, known, and allowed type of it. It was ordered of God, on purpose to represent it. Everything about that deliverance was typical of this redemption, and much is made of it, principally for this reason: because it is so remarkable a type of Christ's redemption. And it was but a shadow, the work in itself was nothing in comparison with the work of redemption. What is a petty redemption of one nation from a temporal bondage, to the eternal salvation of the whole

church of the elect in all ages and nations, from eternal damnation and the introduction of them, not into a temporal Canaan, but into heaven: into eternal glory and blessedness? Was that shadow so much to be commemorated as that a day once a week was to be kept on the account of it, and shall not we much more commemorate that great and glorious work of which it was designed on purpose to be a shadow.

Besides, the words in the fourth commandment, which speak of the deliverance out of Egypt, can be of no significance unto us, unless they are to be interpreted of the gospel-redemption. But the words of the decalogue are spoken to all nations and ages. Therefore, as the words were spoken to the Jews, they referred to the type or shadow. As they are spoken to us, they are to be interpreted of the antitype and substance. For the Egypt from which we under the gospel are redeemed, is the spiritual Egypt; the house of bondage from which we are redeemed, is a state of spiritual bondage. — Therefore the words, as spoken to us, are to be thus interpreted, "Remember, thou was a servant to sin and Satan, and the Lord thy God delivered thee from this bondage, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day."

As the words in the preface to the ten commandments, about the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, are interpreted in our catechism (and as they have respect to us): [they] must be interpreted [as being] of our spiritual redemption. So, by an exact identity of reason, must these words in Deuteronomy, annexed to the fourth command, be interpreted [as] of the same gospel redemption.

The Jewish Sabbath was kept on the day that the children of Israel came up out of the Red sea. For we are told in Deu. 5:15, that this holy rest of the Sabbath was appointed in commemoration of their coming up out of Egypt. But the day of their going through the Red sea was the day of their coming up out of Egypt. For till then they were in the land of Egypt. The Red sea was the boundary of the land of Egypt. — The Scripture itself tells us that the day on which they sung the song of Moses, was the day of their coming up out of the land of Egypt; Hos. 2:15, "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt;" referring plainly to that triumphant song which Moses

and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red sea.

The Scripture tells us that God appointed the Jewish Sabbath in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their task-masters, the Egyptians, and of their rest from their hard bondage and slavery under them; Deu. 5:14, 15, "That thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." But the day that the children of Israel were delivered from their task-masters and had rest from them, was the day when the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. They had no rest from them till then. For though they were before come forth on their journey to go out of the land of Egypt, yet they were pursued by the Egyptians and were exceedingly perplexed and distressed. But on the morning that they came up out of the Red sea, they had complete and final deliverance. Then they had full rest from their taskmasters. Then God said to them, "The Egyptians which ye have seen this day, ye shall see no more for ever;" Exo. 14:13. Then they enjoyed a joyful day of rest, a day of refreshment. Then they sang the song of Moses, and on that day was their Sabbath of rest.

But this coming up of the children of Israel out of the Red sea, was only a type of the resurrection of Christ. That people was the mystical body of Christ, and Moses was a great type of Christ himself. And besides, on that day Christ went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as their Savior and Redeemer. On that morning Christ, in this pillar of cloud and fire, rose out of the Red sea, as out of great waters, which was a type of Christ's rising from a state of death and from that great humiliation which he suffered in death. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is in Scripture represented by his coming up out of deep waters. So it is in Christ's resurrection, as represented by Jonah's coming out of the sea, Mat. 12:40. It is also compared to a deliverance out of deep waters, Psa. 69:1-3, 14, and 15. These things are spoken of Christ, as is evident from this, that many things in this Psalm are in the New Testament expressly applied to Christ. [Compare verse 4 with John 15:25, verse 9 with John 2:17, and verse 2 with Mat. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23;

John 19:29, and verse 2, with Rom. 11:9, 10, and verse 25 with Acts 1:20.] Therefore, as the Jewish Sabbath was appointed on the day on which the pillar of cloud and fire rose out of the Red sea, and on which Moses and the church, the mystical body of Christ, came up out of the same sea, which is a type of the resurrection of Christ — it is a great confirmation that the Christian Sabbath should be kept on the day of the rising of the real body of Christ from the grave, which is the antitype. For surely the Scriptures have taught us that the type should give way to the antitype, and that the shadow should give way to the substance.

Eighth, I argue the same thing from Psa. 118:22-24. There we are taught that the day of Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated with holy joy by the church. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The stone spoken of is Christ: he was refused and rejected by the builders, especially when he was put to death. That making him the head of the corner, which is the Lord's doing and so marvelous in our eyes, is Christ's exaltation, which began with his resurrection. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders. But when God raised him from the dead, then he became the head of the corner. Thus it is evident the apostle interprets it, Acts 4:10, 11, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," etc. — "This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner." And the day on which this was done, we are here taught, God has made to be the day of the rejoicing of the church.

Ninth, the abolition of the Jewish Sabbath seems to be intimated by this: that Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, lay buried on that day. Christ, the author of the world, was the author of that work of creation of which the Jewish Sabbath was the memorial. It was he that worked six days and rested the seventh day from all his works, and was refreshed. Yet he was holden in the chains of death on that day. — God, who created the world, now in his second work of creation, did not follow his own example, if I may so speak. He remained imprisoned in the grave on that day and took another day to rest in.

The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing, for it was kept in commemoration of God's glorious and gracious works of creation and the redemption out of Egypt. Therefore we are directed to call the Sabbath a delight. But it is not a proper day for the church, Christ's spouse, to rejoice, when Christ the bridegroom lies buried in the grave, as Christ says, Mat. 9:15, "That the children of the bridechamber cannot mourn, while the bridegroom is with them. But the time will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; then shall they mourn." — While Christ was holden under the chains of death, then the bridegroom was taken from then. Then it was a proper time for the spouse to mourn and not rejoice. But when Christ rose again, then it was a day of joy, because we are begotten again to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Tenth, Christ has evidently, on purpose and design, peculiarly honored the first day of the week, the day on which he rose from the dead, by taking it from time to time to appear to the apostles, and he chose this day to pour out the Holy Ghost on the apostles, which we read of in the second chapter of Acts. For this was on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week, as you may see by Lev. 23:15-16. And he honored this day by pouring out his Spirit on the apostle John, and giving him his visions, Rev. 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," etc. — Now doubtless Christ had his meaning in thus distinguishingly honoring this day.

Eleventh, it is evident by the New Testament that this was especially the day of the public worship of the primitive church, by the direction of the apostles. We are told that this was the day that they were wont to come together to break bread. And this they evidently did with the approbation of the apostles, inasmuch as they preached to them on that day, and therefore doubtless they assembled together by the direction of the apostles. Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." So the Holy Ghost was careful that the public contributions should be on this day, in all the churches, rather than on any other day, as appears by our text.

Twelfth, this first day of the week is in the New Testament called *the Lord's day*; see Rev. 1:10. — Some say, how do we know that this was the

first day of the week? Every day is the Lord's day. But it is the design of John to tell us *when* he had those visions. And if by the Lord's day is meant any day, how does that inform us *when* that event took place?

But what is meant by this expression we know, just in the same way as we know what is the meaning of any word in the original of the New Testament, or the meaning of any expression in an ancient language, *viz.* By what we find to be the universal signification of the expression in ancient times. This expression, *the Lord's day*, is found by the ancient use of the whole Christian church, by what appears in all the writings of ancient times, even from the apostles' days, to signify the first day of the week.

And the expression implies in it the holiness of the day. For doubtless the day is called *the Lord's day*, as the sacred supper is called *the Lord's supper,* which is so called, because it is a holy supper — which is so called because it is a *holy* supper, to be celebrated in remembrance of the Lord Christ and of his redemption. So this is a holy day, to be kept in remembrance of the Lord Christ and his redemption.

The first day of the week being in Scripture called the Lord's day, sufficiently makes it out to be the day of the week that is to be kept holy unto God. For God has been pleased to call it by his own name. When anything is called by the name of God in Scripture, this denotes the appropriation of it to God. — Thus God put his name upon his people Israel of old; Num. 6:27, "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel." They were called by the name of God, as it is said, 2 Chr. 7:14, "If my people which are called by my name," etc. i.e. They were called God's people, or the Lord's people. This denoted that they were a holy peculiar people above all others. Deu. 7:6, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord;" and so in verse 14, and many other places.

So the city Jerusalem was called by God's name; Jer. 25:29, "Upon the city which is called by my name." Dan. 9:18, 19, "And the city which is called by thy name," etc. This denoted that it was a holy city, a city chosen of God above all other cities for holy uses, as it is often called *the holy city,* as in Neh. 11:1, "To dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city;" and in many other places.

So the temple is said to be a house called by God's name; 1 Kin. 8:43, "This house that is called by name." And often elsewhere. That is, it was called God's house, or the Lord's house. This denoted that it was called a holy place, a house devoted to holy uses, above all others.

So also we find that the first day of the week is called by God's name, being called in Scripture God's day, or *the Lord's day*, which denotes that it is a holy day, a day appropriated to holy uses, above all others in the week.

Thirteenth, the tradition of the church from age to age, though it be no rule, yet may be a great confirmation of the truth in such a case as this is. We find by all accounts that it has been the universal custom of the Christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries, of the Christians keeping the Lord's day (and so in all succeeding ages), and there are no accounts that contradict them. — This day has all along been kept by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.

Now, although this be not sufficient of itself without a foundation in Scripture, yet it may be a confirmation of it, because here is really matter of conviction in it to our reason. Reason may greatly confirm truths revealed in the Scriptures. The universality of the custom throughout all Christian counties, in all ages, by what account we have of them, is a good argument that the church had it from the apostles. And it is difficult to conceive how all should come to agree to set up such a custom through the world, of different sects and opinions, and we have no account of any such thing.

Fourteenth, it is no way weakening to these arguments, that there is nothing more plainly said about it in the New Testament, till John wrote his *Revelation*, because there is a sufficient reason to be given for it. In all probability it was purposely avoided by the Holy Spirit, in the first settling of the Christian churches in the world, both among the heathen and among the Jews, but especially for the sake of the Jews, and out of

tenderness to the Jewish Christians. For it is evident that Christ and the apostles declared one thing after another to them gradually as they could bear it.

The Jews had a regard for their Sabbath above almost anything in the laws of Moses, and there was that in the Old Testament which tended to uphold them in the observance of this, much more strongly than anything else that was Jewish. God had made so much of it, had so solemnly, frequently, and carefully commanded it, and had often so dreadfully punished the breach of it, that there was more color for their retaining this custom than almost any other.

Therefore Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet he said not, because they could not as yet bear them, and gave this reason for it: that it was like putting new wine into old bottles. They were so contrary to their old customs, that Christ was gradual in revealing them. He gave here a little and there a little, as they could bear; and it was a long time before he told them plainly the principal doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. — He took the most favorable opportunities to tell them of his sufferings and death, especially when they were full of admiration at some signal miracle, and were confirmed in it, that he was the Messiah.

He told them many things much more plainly after his resurrection than before. But even then, he did not tell them all, but left more to be revealed by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. They therefore were much more enlightened after that than before. However, as yet he did not reveal all. The abolition of the ceremonial law about meats and drinks was not fully known till after this.

The apostles were in the same manner careful and tender of those to whom they preached and wrote. It was very gradually that they ventured to teach them the cessation of the ceremonial laws of circumcision and abstinence from unclean meats. How tender is the apostle Paul with such as scrupled in, in the fourteenth chapter of Romans! He directs those who had knowledge, to keep it to themselves, for the sake of their weak brethren. Rom 14:22 — But I need say no more to evince this.

However, I will say this, that it is very possible that the apostles themselves at first might not have this change of the day of the Sabbath fully revealed to them. The Holy Ghost, at his descent, revealed much to them, yet after that, they were ignorant of much of gospel-doctrine. Yea, they were so, a great while after they acted the part of apostles in preaching, baptizing, and governing the church. Peter was surprised when he was commanded to eat meats legally unclean, and so were the apostles in general, when Peter was commanded to go to the Gentiles, to preach to them.

Thus tender was Christ of the church while an infant. He did not feed them with strong meat, but was careful to bring in the observance of the Lord's day by degrees, and therefore took all occasions to honor it: by appearing from time to time of choice on that day, by sending down his Spirit on that day in that remarkable manner at Pentecost, by ordering Christians to meet in order to break bread on that day, and by ordering their contributions and other duties of worships to be holden on it — thus introducing the observance of it by degrees. And though as yet the Holy Ghost did not speak very plainly about it, yet God took special care that there should be sufficient evidences of his will, to be found out by the Christian church, when it should be more established and settled, and should have come to the strength of a man.

Thus I leave it with everyone to judge, whether there be not sufficient evidence, that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be kept by the Christian church as a Sabbath?

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Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

"In due time their foot will slip"--Deut. 32:35

In this verse the vengeance of God is threatened upon the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's chosen people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, despite all of God's wonderful works towards them, remained without sense, having no discernment in them (Deut. 32:28). After all the cultivations of Heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as shown in verses 32 and 33. The verse that I have chosen for my text, "In due time their foot will slide," seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to "ruin;" as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to falling. This is implied in the manner of the destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed in Psalm 73:18, "Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin."

2. It implies, they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is liable to fall at every moment, he cannot foresee from moment to moment whether he shall stand or fall; and when he does fall, he falls suddenly without warning: which is also expressed in Psalm 73:18-19, "Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!"

3. Another thing that is implied is, that they are liable to fall by "themselves," without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they have not already fallen, and don't fall now, is only that God's appointed time has not yet come. For it is said that when that appointed time comes, "their foot will slip." Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined to do because of their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they will fall into ruin; as he that stands in such slippery descending ground, on the edge of a pit, he

cannot stand alone, when he is let go of then he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell but the mere pleasure of God." By the "mere" pleasure of God, I mean His "sovereign" pleasure, His arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation on His part, not hindered by any difficulty. God's will not hindered in the least degree in respect to the preservation of wicked men. The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no lack of "power" in God to throw wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up: the strongest have no power to resist Him, nor can anyone save them from His hands. He is not only able to throw wicked men into hell, but He can do it most easily. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty trying to subdue a rebel, who has found ways to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the mere numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken into pieces. They are like great heaps of light chaff [worthless matter;rubbish] before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry hay before devouring flames. We find it easy to step on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; likewise it is easy for us to cut a slender thread that anything hangs by: therefore it easy for God, when He pleases, to throw His enemies down into hell. What are we, that we should think that we can stand before Him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the mountains collapse?

2. They "deserve" to be thrown into hell; and divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God using His power at any moment to destroy them. Yes, on the contrary, justice calls out loud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" (Luke 13:7). Every moment the sword of divine justice is waved over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They not only justly deserve to be thrown down there, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and unchangeable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between Him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are already bound over to hell. John 3:18, "Whoever does not believe stands condemned already." So that every unconverted man rightly belongs to hell: that is his place; from there he has his origin, John 8:23, "You are from below," and he is headed for there; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of His unchangeable law, assigns to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same "anger" and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they don't go down to hell at each moment is not because God, in whose power they are under, is not exceedingly angry with them, as He is with the many miserable human beings now tormented in hell, and who there feel and bear the fierceness of His wrath. Yes, God is a great deal more angry with the great numbers that are now on earth; yes, doubtless with the many that are now sitting in this congregation, who feel completely at ease, than He is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell. It is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that He does not let loose His hand and cut them off. God is not like them, though they imagine that He is. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames now rage and glow. The glittering sword is sharpened and held over them, and the pit has opened its mouth under them.

5. The "devil" stands ready to overthrow them, and seize them as his own, at whatever moment God shall allow him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, Luke 11:21. The devils watch them; they are next to them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw His hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment rush upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth

wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be rapidly swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently ignite and burst into flames of hell-fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of all unsaved men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell-fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceedingly violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would burst into flame after the same manner as the same depravity, the same hatred, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would generate the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked in Scripture are compared to the tossing sea, Isaiah 57:20.

For the present, God restrains their wickedness by His mighty power, as He does the raging waves of the tossing sea, saying, "This far you may come and no farther;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon sweep away everything in its path. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, the soul would become perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is unrestrained and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a basin of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. Wicked men cannot find even a moment's security in the fact that death does not appear to be at hand. The unbelieving man has no security in the fact that he is healthy, and that he cannot perceive of any accident taking him out of the world, and that there is no visible danger in any of his circumstances. The diverse and continual experience of the world in all ages shows this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world.

The unseen, unthought of ways and means of persons suddenly being taken out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noonday; the sharpest eyesight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing that indicates that God needs to use a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of His providence, to destroy any wicked man at any moment. All the options of taking sinners out of the world, are in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to His power and determination, that it depends merely upon the will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell.

8. Unbeliever's prudence and care taken to preserve their own lives, or the caring concern of others to preserve them, does not give them a moment's security. To this, divine providence and universal experience also bears testimony. There is clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and prudent men of the world, and others, with regard to their vulnerability to an early and unexpected death: but how is it in fact? Eccl. 2:16, "Like the fool, the wise man too must die!"

9. All wicked men's pains and instruments which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, does not secure them from hell for one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one determines in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that his strategies will not fail. They surely hear that only a few are saved, and that the greater part of men that have died have gone into hell; but each one imagines that he has a better plan for his own escape than others have come up with. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take sufficient care, and to arrange the concerns of his life

so that he will not fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in the confidence of their own strength and wisdom; they trust in nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who have lived under the same patient grace of God, and are now dead, and have undoubtedly gone into hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive; it was not because they did not determine for themselves how to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had determined otherwise in my mind; I thought I had a good plan for myself: I thought my strategy was good. I intended to take sufficient care; but it came upon me unexpectedly: I didn't expect it at that time, and in that way; it came as a thief: Death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me. O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do after the life on earth; and when I was saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has put Himself under no obligation, has made no promise, to keep any unbelieving man out of hell for one second. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but only what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yes and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

Therefore natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit

of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, His anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of His wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment: the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and are eager to grab hold of them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged patience, of an incensed God.

APPLICATION

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This you have heard is the case of every one of you that are without Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning fire, is stretched out wide under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not cognizant of this; you find that you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, like your good health, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw His hand, they would no more keep you from falling, than thin air would hold a person up that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as heavy as lead, and adds a downwards tendency with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your good health, and your own care and prudence, and best plans for salvation, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a

spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you for one moment; for you are a burden to it: the creation groans with you; the animal is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her fruits to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies.

God's animals are good, and were made for men to serve God with and do not willingly serve any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spit you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of Him who has subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, halts His destroying wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when it is once let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed before; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day storing up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and growing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw His hand from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yes, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest,

sturdiest devil in hell, it would never be able to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice points the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one second from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all of you that never had the great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all of you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a new state, and never experienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God.

However, you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious feelings, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and secret prayer closets, and in your churches, it is nothing but His mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However, you may now be unconvinced of the truth that you now hear, in time you will be fully convinced of it. Those that were in similar circumstances as you are, are now gone and destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing to happen, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some detestable insect, over the fire, detests you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be thrown into the fire; He eyes are too pure than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes, than the most hateful venomous snake is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell last night; that you were allowed to awake up again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose this morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here

in this church, provoking His pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending His solemn worship. Yes, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it apart; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. And consider here more particularly,

1. "Whose" wrath it is: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most powerful prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute dictators, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. 20:2 "A king's wrath is like the roar of a lion; he who angers him forfeits his life." The person that greatly enrages a volatile prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly kings, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. They can do little, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are like grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is much more terrible than theirs, as His majesty is greater. Luke 12:4-5, "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him."

2. It is the "fury" of His wrath that you are exposed to. We often

read of the fury of God; as in Isa. 59:18, "According to what they have done, so will He repay wrath to His enemies and retribution to His foes." So Isa. 66:15, "See, the LORD is coming with fire, and His chariots are like a whirlwind; He will bring down His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire." And in many other places. So, Rev. 19:15, we read of "the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is the "fury of the wrath of God." The fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful that must be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?

But it is also "the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." As though there would be a very great manifestation of His almighty power in what the fury of His wrath should inflict; as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men exert their strength in the fury of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor man or woman that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? and whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fury of His anger, implies, that He will inflict wrath without any pity. When God looks upon the inexpressible circumstances of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; He will have no compassion upon you, He will not withhold the executions of His wrath, or in the least lighten His hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God stop His destroying wind; be will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful for fear that you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall "not suffer beyond what strict justice requires."

Nothing shall be withheld, because it is too intense for you to bear. Ezek. 8:18, "Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen

to them." Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when the day of mercy is past, your most pitiful and sorrowful cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be totally lost and thrown away by God, and He will have no regard for your welfare. God will have no other use for you, but for you to suffer misery; you shall for no other purpose; for your body will be a body of wrath designed for destruction; and there will be no other use of your body, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to Him, that it is said He will only "laugh and mock," Prov. 1:25-31,

Since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you--when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

How awful are those words, Isa. 63:3, which are the words of the great God, "I have trodden the winepress alone; I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing." It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fury of wrath. If you cry to God to pity you, He will be so far from pitying you in your dismal case, or showing you the least regard or favor, that, instead of that, He will only tread you under foot. And though He will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet He will not regard that, but He will crush you under His feet without mercy; He will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on His garments, so as to stain all His clothes. He will not only hate you, but He will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under His feet, to be trodden down as the filth of the back alleys.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict

to that end, that He might show what the wrath of Jehovah is. God has had it on His heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent His love is, and also how terrible His wrath is. Sometimes earthly rulers have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that would provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and arrogant king of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and accordingly gave the order that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before: doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fury that human art could raise it.

But the great God is also willing to show His wrath, and magnify His awful majesty and mighty power, in the extreme sufferings of His enemies. Rom. 9:22, "What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath--prepared for destruction?" And seeing this is His design, and what He has determined, even to show how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness, of Jehovah is, He will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be a dreadful witness. When the great and angry God has risen up and executed His awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of His indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isa. 33:12-13, "The peoples will be burned as if to lime; like cut thornbushes they will be set ablaze. You who are far away, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge my power!"

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the inexpressible strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go out and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isa. 66:23-24, "'All mankind will come and

bow down before me,' says the LORD. And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

4. It is "everlasting" wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one second; but you must suffer it for all of eternity. There will be no end to this extreme horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for "who knows the power of God's anger?"

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this sermon, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery for all eternity. We do not know who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they may now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much conviction, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a

mournful and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many will remember this sermon in hell! And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this church, in health, quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning.

Those of you that continue in your unsaved condition, who shall keep out of hell the longest, will eventually be there in a little while! Your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that before appeared as likely to have been alive now as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and complete despair; but here you are in the land of the living, and in the Church, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day where Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day where many are flocking to Him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to Him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful it is to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are suffering grief and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and cry because of the apprehension of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Aren't your souls as precious as the souls of the people in the nearby town where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Aren't there many here who have lived a long time in the world, and still are not born again? And so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but stored up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh, Sirs, your case, in a special way, is

extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Don't you see how persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You have need to consider yourselves, and awake thoroughly out of sleep. You cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.

Young men and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful gorge in blindness and hardness. And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and have become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet without Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now listen to the loud calls of God's word and providence.

This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favor to some, will doubtless be a day of remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases quickly, on such a day as this, if they neglect their souls; and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in His elect in all parts of the land; and probably the greater part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on the great outpouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the apostles' days, the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you were born, to see such a season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, and will wish that you had died and gone to hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid

at the roots of the trees, that every tree which does not bring forth good fruit, may be cut down, and thrown into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is without Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Hurry and escape with your lives, don't look behind you. Escape to the mountain, unless you be consumed."

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The Manner in Which the Salvation of the Soul is to be Sought

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." [Genesis 6:22]

Concerning these words, I would observe three things:

1. What it was that God commanded Noah, to which these words refer. It was the building of an ark according to the particular direction of God, against the time when the flood of waters should come; and the laying up of food for himself, his family, and the other animals, which were to be preserved in the ark. We have the particular commands which God gave him respecting this affair, from the 14th verse, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood..."

2. We may observe the special design of the work which God had enjoined upon Noah: it was to save himself and his family, when the rest of the world should be drowned. See ver. 17, 18. We may observe Noah's obedience. He obeyed God: thus did Noah. And his obedience was thorough and universal: according to all that God commanded him, so did he. He not only began, but he went through his work, which God had commanded him to undertake for his salvation from the flood. To this obedience the apostle refers in Heb. 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.

DOCTRINE.

We should be willing to engage in and go through great undertakings, in order to our own salvation.

The building of the ark, which was enjoined upon Noah, that he and his family might be saved, was a great undertaking: the ark was a building of

vast size; the length of it being three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A cubit, till of late, was by learned men reckoned to be equal to a foot and a half of our measure. But lately some learned men of our nation have travelled into Egypt, and other ancient countries, and have measured some ancient buildings there, which are of several thousand years standing, and of which ancient histories give us the dimensions in cubits; particularly the pyramids of Egypt, which are standing entire at this day. By measuring these, and by comparing the measure in feet with the ancient accounts of their measure in cubits, a cubit is found to be almost two and twenty inches. Therefore learned men more lately reckon a cubit much larger than they did formerly. So that the ark, reckoned so much larger every way, will appear to be almost of double the bulk which was formerly ascribed to it According to this computation of the cubit, it was more than five hundred and fifty feet long, about ninety feet broad, and about fifty feet in height.

To build such a structure, with all those apartments and divisions in it which were necessary, and in such a manner as to be fit to float upon the water for so long a time, was then a great undertaking. It took Noah, with all the workmen he employed, a hundred and twenty years, or thereabouts, to build it For so long it was, that the Spirit of God strove, and the long-suffering God waited on the old world, as you may see in Gen. 4:3: "My Spirit shall I not always strive with man; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." All this while the ark was a preparing, as appears by 1 Pet. 3:20: "When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." It was a long time that Noah constantly employed himself in this business. Men would esteem that undertaking very great, which should keep them constantly employed even for one half of that time. Noah must have had a great and constant care upon his mind for these one hundred and twenty years, in superintending this work, and in seeing that all was done exactly according to the directions which God had given him.

Not only was Noah himself continually employed, but it required a great number of workmen to be constantly employed, during all that time, in procuring, and collecting, and fitting the materials, and in putting them together in due form. How great a thing was it for Noah to undertake

such a work! For beside the continual care and labor, it was a work of vast expense. It is not probable that any of that wicked generation would put to a finger to help forward such a work, which doubtless they believed was merely the fruit of Noah's folly, without full wages. Noah must needs have been very rich, to be able to bear the expense of such a work, and to pay so many workmen for so long a time. It would have been a very great expense for a prince; and doubtless Noah was very rich, as Abraham and Job were afterwards. But it is probable that Noah spent all his worldly substance in this work, thus manifesting his faith in the word of God, by selling all he had, as believing there would surely come a flood, which would destroy all; so that if he should keep what he had, it would be of no service to him. Herein he has set us an example, showing us how we ought to sell all for our salvation.

Noah's undertaking was of great difficulty, as it exposed him to the continual reproaches of all his neighbors, for that whole one hundred and twenty years. None of them believed what he told them of a flood which was about to drown the world. For a man to undertake such a vast piece of work, under notion that it should be the means of saving him when the world should be destroyed, it made him the continual laughing-stock of the world. When he was about to hire workmen, doubtless all laughed at him, and we may suppose, that though the workmen consented to work for wages, yet they laughed at the folly of him who employed them. When the ark was begun, we may suppose that every one that passed by and saw such a huge bulk stand there, laughed at, it, calling it Noah's folly.

In these days, men are with difficulty brought to do or submit to that which makes them the objects of the reproach of all their neighbors. Indeed if while some reproach them, others stand by them and honor them, this will support them. But it is very difficult for a man to go on in a way wherein he makes himself the laughing stock of the whole world, and wherein he can find none who do not despise him. Where is the man that can stand the shock of such a trial for twenty years?

But in such an undertaking as this, Noah at the divine direction, engaged and went through it, that himself and his family might be saved from the common destruction which was shortly about to come on the world. He

began, and also made an end: "According to all that God commanded him, so did he." Length of time did not weary him: he did not grow weary of his vast expense. He stood the shock of the derision of all his neighbors; and of all the world year after year: he did not grow weary of being their laughing-stock, so as to give over his enterprise; but persevered in it till the ark was finished. After this, he was at the trouble and charge of procuring stores for the maintenance of his family, and of all the various kinds of creatures, for so long a time. Such an undertaking he engaged in and went through in order to a temporal salvation. How great an undertaking then should men be willing to engage in and go through in order to their eternal salvation! A salvation from an eternal deluge; from being overwhelmed with the billows of God's wrath of which Noah's flood was but a shadow.

I shall particularly handle this doctrine under the three following propositions.

I. There is a work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished by men, if they would be saved.
II. This business is a great undertaking.
III. Men should be willing to enter upon and go through this undertaking though it be great, seeing it is for their own salvation.

Proposition. There is a work or business which men must enter upon and accomplish, in order to their salvation.-Men have no reason to expect to be saved in idleness, or to go to heaven in a way of doing nothing. No; in order to it, there is a great work, which must be not only begun, but finished-I shall speak upon this proposition, in answer to two inquiries.

I. What is this work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished in order to the salvation of men?

Answer. It is the work of seeking salvation in a way of constant observance of all the duty to which God directs its in his word. If we would be saved, we must seek salvation. For although men do not obtain heaven of themselves; they do not go thither accidentally, or without any intention or endeavors of their own. God, in his word, hath directed men

to seek their salvation as they would hope to obtain it. There is a race that is set before them, which they must run, and in that race come off victors, in order to their winning the prize.

The Scriptures have told us what particular duties must be performed by us in order to our salvation. It is not sufficient that men seek their salvation on in the observance of some of those duties; but they must be observed universally. The work we have to do is not an obedience only to some, but to all the commands of God; a compliance with every institution of worship; a diligent use of all the appointed means of grace; a doing of all duty towards God and towards man.-It is not sufficient that men have some respect to all the commands of God, and that they may be said to seek their salvation in some sort of observance of all the commands; but they must be devoted to it.

They must not make this a business by the by, or a thing in which they are negligent and careless, or which they do with a slack hand; but it must be their great business, being attended to as their great concern. They must not only seek, but strive; they must do what their hand findeth to do with their might, as men thoroughly engaged in their minds, and influenced and set forward by great desire and strong resolution. They must act as those that see so much of the importance of religion above all other things, that every thing else must be as an occasional affair, and nothing must stand in competition with its duties. This must be the one thing they do; Phil. 3:13, "This one thing I do."-It must be the business to which they make all other affairs give place, and to which they are ready to make other things a sacrifice. They must be ready to part with pleasures and honor, estate and life, and to sell all, that they may successfully accomplish this business.

It is required of every man, that he not only do something in this business, but that he should devote himself to it; which implies that he should give up himself to it, all his affairs, and all his temporal enjoyments. This is the import of taking up the cross, of taking Christ's yoke upon us, and of denying ourselves to follow Christ. The rich young man, who came kneeling to Christ to know what he should do to he saved, Mark 10:17, in some sense sought salvation but did not obtain it. In some sense he kept all the commands from his youth up; but was not cordially

devoted to this business. He had not made a sacrifice to it of all his enjoyments, as appeared when Christ came to try him; he would not part with his estate for him.

It is not only necessary that men should seem to he very much engaged, and appear as if they were devoted to their duty for a little while; but there must be a constant devotedness, in a persevering way, as Noah was to the business of the building the ark, going on with that great, difficult, and expensive affair, till it was finished, and till the flood came. Men must not only be diligent in the use of the means of grace, and be anxiously engaged to escape eternal ruin, till they obtain hope and comfort; but afterwards they must persevere in the duties of religion, till the flood come, the flood of death. Not only must the faculties, strength, and possessions of men be devoted to this work, but also their time and their lives; they must give up their whole lives to it, even to the very day when God causes the storms and floods to come. This is the work or business which men have to do in order to their salvation.

Inquiry 2. Why is it needful that men should undertake to go through such a work in order to their salvation?

Answer 1. Not to merit salvation, or to recommend them to the saving mercy of God. Men are not saved on the account of any work of theirs, and yet they are not saved without works. If we merely consider what it is for which, or on the account of which, men are saved, no work at all in men is necessary to their salvation. In this respect they are saved wholly without any work of theirs: Tit. iii. 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We must indeed be saved on the account of works; but not our own. It is on account of the works which Christ hath done for us. Works are the fixed price of eternal life; it is fixed by an eternal, unalterable rule of righteousness. But since the fall there is no hope of our doing these works, without salvation offered freely without money and without price. But,

2. Though it be not needful that we do any thing to merit salvation, which Christ hath fully merited for all who believe in him; yet God, for wise and

holy ends, hath appointed, that we should come to final salvation in no other way, but that of good works done by us. God did not save Noah on account of the labor and expense he was at in building the ark. Noah's salvation from the flood was an instance of the free and distinguishing mercy of God. Nor did God stand in need of Noah's care, or cost, or labor, to build an ark. The same power which created the world, and which brought the flood of waters upon the earth, could have made the ark in an instant, without any care or cost to Noah, or any of the labor of those workmen who were employed for so long a time. Yet God was pleased to appoint, that Noah should be saved in this way. So God hath appointed that man should not be saved without his undertaking and doing this work of which I have been speaking; and therefore we are commanded "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," Philip. 2:12.

There are many wise ends to be answered by the establishment of such a work as prerequisite to salvation. The glory of God requires it. For although God stand in no need of any thing that men do to recommend them to his saving mercy, yet it would reflect much on the glory of God's wisdom and holiness, to bestow salvation on men in such a way as tends to encourage them in sloth and wickedness; or in any other way than that which tends to promote diligence and holiness. Man was made capable of action, with many powers of both body and mind fitting him for it. He was made for business and not idleness and the main business for which he was made, was that of religion. Therefore it becomes the wisdom of God to bestow salvation and happiness on man in such a way as tends most to promote his end in this respect, and, to stir him up to a diligent use of his faculties and talents.

It becomes the wisdom of God so to order it, that things of great value and importance should not be obtained without great labor and diligence. Much human learning and great moral accomplishments are not to be obtained without care and labor. It is wisely so ordered, in order to maintain in man a due sense of the value of those things which are excellent. If great things were in common easily obtained, it would have a tendency to cause men to slight and undervalue them. Men commonly despise those things which are cheap, and which are obtained without difficulty.

Although the work of obedience performed by men, be not necessary in order to merit salvation; yet it is necessary in order to their being prepared for it. Men cannot be prepared for salvation without seeking it in such a way as hath been described. This is necessary in order that they have a proper sense of their own necessities, and unworthiness; and in order that they be prepared and disposed to prize salvation when bestowed, and be properly thankful to God for it. The requisition of so great a work in order to our salvation is no way inconsistent with the freedom of the offer of salvation; as after all it is both offered and bestowed without any respect to our work, as the price or meritorious cause of our salvation, as I have already explained. Besides, salvation bestowed in this way is better for us, more for our advantage and happiness both in this and the future world, than if it were given without this requisition.

II. Proposition. This work or business, which must be done in order to the salvation of men, is a great undertaking.

It often appears so to men upon whom it is urged. Utterly to break off from all their sins, and to give up themselves forever to the business of religion, without making a reserve of any one lust, submitting to and complying with every command of God, in all cases, and persevering therein, appears to many so great a thing, that they are in vain urged to undertake it. In so doing it seems to them, that they should give up themselves to a perpetual bondage. The greater part of men therefore choose to put it off, and keep it at as great a distance as they can. They cannot bear to think of entering immediately on such a hard service, and rather than do it, they will run the risk of eternal damnation, by putting it off to an uncertain future opportunity.

Although the business of religion is far from really being as it appears to such men, or the devil will be sure, if he can, to represent it in false colors to sinners, and make it appear as black and as terrible as he can; yet it is indeed a great business, a great undertaking, and it is fit that all who are urged to it should count the cost beforehand, and be sensible of the difficulty attending it. For though the devil discourages many from this undertaking, by representing it to be more difficult than it really is; yet with others he takes a contrary course and flatters them it is a very easy

thing, a trivial business, which may be done at any time when they please, and so emboldens them to defer it from that consideration. But let none conceive any other notion of that business of religion, which is absolutely necessary to their salvation, than that it is a great undertaking. It is so on the following accounts.

1. It is a business of great labor and care. There are many commands to be obeyed, many duties to be done, duties to God, duties to our neighbor, and duties, to ourselves. There is much opposition in the way of these duties from without. There is a subtle and powerful adversary laying all manner of blocks in the way. There are innumerable temptations of Satan to be resisted and repelled. There is great opposition from the world, innumerable snares laid, on every side, many rocks and mountains to be passed over, many streams to be passed through, and many flatteries and enticements from a vain world to be resisted. There is a great opposition from within; a dull and sluggish heart, which is exceedingly averse from that activity in religion which is necessary; a carnal heart, which is averse from religion and spiritual exercises, and continually drawing the contrary way; and a proud and a deceitful heart, in which corruption will be exerting itself in all manner of ways. So that nothing can be done to any effect without a most strict and careful watch, great labor and strife.

2. It is a constant in business.-In that business which requires great labor, men love now and then to have a space of relaxation, that they may rest from their extraordinary labor. But this is a business which must be followed every day. Luke ix. 23, " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." We must never give ourselves any relaxation from this business; it must be continually prosecuted day after day. If sometimes we make a great stir and bustle concerning religion, but then lay all aside to take our ease, and do so from time to time, it will be of no good effect; we had even as good do nothing at all. The business of religion so followed is never like to come to any good issue, nor is the work ever like to be accomplished to any good purpose.

3. It is a great undertaking, as it is an undertaking of great expense.-We must, therein sell all: we must follow this business at the expense of all our unlawful pleasures and delights, at the expense of our carnal ease,

often at the expense of our substance, of our credit among men, the good will of our neighbors, at the expense of all our earthly friends, and even at the expense of life itself. Herein it is like Noah's undertaking to build the ark, which, as hath been shown was a costly undertaking: it was expensive to his reputation among men, exposing him to be the continual laughing-stock of all his neighbors and of the whole world: and it was expensive to his estate, and probably cost him all that he had.

4. Sometimes the fear, trouble, and exercise of mind, which are undergone respecting this business, and the salvation of the soul, are great and long continued, before any comfort is obtained. Sometimes persons in this situation labor long in the dark, and sometimes, as it were, in the very fire, they having great distress of conscience, great fears, and many perplexing temptations, before they obtain light and comfort to make their care and labor more easy to them. They sometimes earnestly, and for a long time, seek comfort, but find it not, because they seek it not in a right manner, nor in the right objects. God therefore hides his face. They cry, but God doth not answer their prayers. They strive, but all seems in vain. They seem to themselves not at all to get forward, or nearer to a deliverance from sin: but to go backward, rather than forward. They see no glimmerings of light: things rather appear darker and darker. Insomuch that they are often ready to be discouraged, and to sink under the weight of their present distress, and under the prospect of future misery. In this situation, and under these views, some are almost driven to despair. Many, after they have obtained some saving comfort, are again involved in darkness and trouble. It is with them as it was with the Christian Hebrews, Heb. 10:32, "After ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions. Some through a melancholy habit and distemper of body, together with Satan's temptations, spend a great part of their lives in distress and darkness, even after they have had some saving comfort.

5. It is a business which, by reason of the many difficulties, snares, and dangers that attend it, requires much instruction, consideration, and counsel. There is no business wherein men stand in need of counsel more than in this. It is a difficult undertaking, a hard matter to proceed aright in it. There are ten thousand wrong ways, which men may take; there are

many labyrinths wherein many poor souls are entangled and never find the way out ; there are many rocks on which thousands of souls have suffered shipwreck, for want of, having steered aright.

Men of themselves know not how to proceed in this business, any more than the children of Israel in the wilderness knew where to go without the guidance, of the pillar of cloud and fire. There is great need that they search the Scriptures, and give diligent heed to the instructions and directions contained in them, as to a light shining in a dark place and that they ask counsel of those skilled in these matters. And there is no business in which men have so much need of seeking to God by prayer, for his counsel, and that he would lead them in the right way, and show them the strait gate. " For strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" yea, there are none that find it without direction from heaven. The building of the ark was a work of great difficulty on this account, that Noah's wisdom was not sufficient to direct him how to make such a building as should be a sufficient security against such a flood, and which should be a convenient dwelling-place for himself, his family, and all the various kinds of beasts and birds, and creeping things. Nor could he ever have known how to construct this building, had not God directed him.

6. This business never ends till life ends. They that undertake this laborious, careful, expensive, self-denying business, must not expect to rest from their labors, till death shall have put an end to them. The long continuance of the work which Noah undertook was what especially made it a great undertaking. This also was what made the travel of the children of Israel through the wilderness appear so great to them, that it was continued for so long a time. Their spirits failed, they were discouraged, and had not a heart to go through with so great an undertaking. But such is this business that it runs parallel with life, whether it be longer or shorter. Although we should live to a great age, our race and warfare will not be finished till death shall come. We must not expect that an end will be put to our labor, and care, and strife, by any hope of a good estate which we may obtain. Past attainments and past success will not excuse us from what remains for the future, nor will they make future constant labor and care unnecessary to our salvation.

III. Men should be willing to engage in and go through this business, however great and difficult it may seem to them, seeing it is for their own salvation. Because,

1. A deluge of wrath will surely come. The inhabitants of the old world would not believe that there would come such a flood of waters upon the earth as that of which Noah told them, though he told them often; neither would they take any care to avoid the destruction. Yet such a deluge did come; nothing of all those things of which Noah had forewarned them, failed.

So there will surely come a more dreadful deluge of divine wrath on this wicked world. We are often forewarned of it in the Scriptures, and the world, as then, doth not believe any such thing. Yet the threatening will as certainly be accomplished, as the threatening denounced against the old world. A day of wrath is coming; it will come at its appointed season; it will not tarry, it
shall not be delayed one moment beyond its appointed time.

2. All such as do not seasonably undertake and go through the great work mentioned will surely be swallowed up in this deluge. When the floods of wrath shall come, they will universally overwhelm the wicked world: all such as shall not have taken care to prepare an ark, will surely be swallowed up in it; they will find no other way of escape. In vain shall salvation be expected from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; for the flood shall be above the tops of all the mountains. Or if they shall hide themselves in the caves and dens of the mountains, there the waters of the flood will find them out, and there shall they miserably perish. As those of the old world who were not in the ark perished, Gen. 7:21, 23, so all who shall not have secured to themselves a place in the spiritual ark of the gospel, shall perish much more miserably than the old world. Doubtless the inhabitants of the old world had many contrivances to save themselves. Some, we may suppose, ascended to the tops of their houses, being driven out of one story to another, till at last they perished. Others climbed to the tops of high towers; who yet were washed thence by the boisterous waves of the rising flood. Some climbed to the tops of trees; others to the tops of mountains, and especially of the

highest mountains. But all was in vain; the flood sooner or later swallowed them all up; only Noah and his family, who had taken care to prepare an ark, remained alive. So it will doubtless be at the end of the world, when Christ shall dome to judge the world in righteousness. Some, when they shall look up and see him coming in the clouds of heaven, shall hide themselves in closets, and secret places in their houses. Others flying to the caves and dens of the earth, shall attempt to hide themselves there. Others shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.-So it will be after the sentence is pronounced, and wicked men see that terrible fire coming, which is to burn this world forever, and which will be a deluge of fire, and will burn the earth even to the bottoms of the mountains, and to its very centre. Deut. 32:22, "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." I say, when the wicked shall, after the sentence, see this great fire beginning to kindle, and to take hold of this earth; there will be many contrivances devised by them to escape, some flying to caves and holes in the earth, some hiding themselves in one place, and some in another. But let them hide themselves where they will, or let them do what they will, it will be utterly in vain. Every cave shall burn as an oven, the rocks and mountains shall melt with fervent heat, and if they could creep down to the very centre of the earth, still the heat would follow them, and rage with as much vehemence there, as on the very surface.

So when wicked men, who neglect their great work in their lifetime, who are not willing to go through the difficulty and labor of this work, draw near to death, they sometimes do many things to escape death, and put forth many endeavors to lengthen out their lives at least a little longer. For this end, they send for physicians, and perhaps many are consulted, and their prescriptions are punctually observed. They also use many endeavors to save their souls from hell. They cry to God;. they confess their past sins; they promise future reformation; and, Oh what would they not give for some small addition to their lives, or some hope of future happiness! But all proves in vain: God hath numbered their days and finished them; and as they have sinned away the day of grace, they must even bear the consequence, and forever lie down in sorrow.

3. The destruction, when it shall come, will be infinitely terrible. The destruction of the old world by the flood was terrible; but that eternal destruction which is coming on the wicked is infinitely more so. That flood of waters was but an image of this awful flood of divine vengeance. When the waters poured down, more like spouts or cataracts, or the fall of a great river, than like rain; what an awful appearance was there of the wrath of God! This however but an image of that terrible outpouring of the wrath of God which shall be forever, yea forever and ever, on wicked men. And when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters burst forth out of the ground though they had issued out of the womb (Job38:8), this was an image of the mighty breakings forth of God's wrath, which shall be, when the flood gates of wrath shall be drawn up. How may we suppose that the wicked of the old world repented that they had not hearkened to the warnings which Noah had given them, when they saw these dreadful things, and saw that they must perish! How much more will you repent your refusing to hearken to the gracious warnings of the gospel, when you shall see the fire of God's wrath against you, pouring down from heaven, and bursting on all sides out of bowels of the earth!

4. Though the work which is necessary in order to man's salvation be a great work, yet it is not impossible. What was required of Noah, doubtless appeared a very great and difficult undertaking. Yet he undertook it with resolution, and he was carried through it. So if we undertake this work with the same good will and resolution, we shall undoubtedly be successful. However difficult it be, yet multitudes have gone through it, and have obtained salvation by the means. It is not a work beyond the faculties of our nature, nor beyond the opportunities which God giveth us. If men will but take warning, and hearken to counsel, if they will but be sincere and in good earnest, be seasonable in their work, take their opportunities, use their advantages be steadfast, and not wavering; they shall not fail.

APPLICATION.

The use I would make of this doctrine, is to exhort all to undertake and go through this great work, which they have to do in order to their salvation, and this let the work seem ever so great and difficult. If your nature be

averse to it, and there seems to be very frightful things in the way, so that your heart is ready to fail at the prospect; yet seriously consider what has been said, and act a wise part. Seeing it is for yourselves, for your own salvation; seeing it is for so great a salvation, for your deliverance from eternal destruction; and seeing it is of such absolute necessity in order to your salvation, that the deluge of divine wrath will come, and there will be no escaping it without preparing an ark; is it not best for you to undertake the work, engage in it with your might, and go through it, though this cannot be done without great labor, care, and difficulty, and expense?

I would by no means flatter you concerning this work, or go about to make you believe, that you shall find an easy light business of it: no, I would not have you expect any such thing. I would have you sit down and count the cost; and if you cannot find it in your hearts to engage in a great, hard, laborious, and expensive undertaking, and to persevere in it to the end of life, pretend not to be religious. Indulge yourselves in your ease; follow your pleasures; eat, drink, and be merry; even conclude to go to hell in that way, and never make any more pretenses of seeking your salvation. Here consider several things in particular.

1. How often you have been warned of the approaching flood of God's wrath. How frequently you have been told of hell, heard the threatenings of the word of God set before you, and been warned to flee from the wrath to come. It is with you as it was with the inhabitants of the old world. Noah warned them abundantly of the approaching flood, and counseled them to take care for their safety, 1 Pet. 3:19, 20. Noah warned them in words; and he preached to them. He warned them also in his actions. His building the ark, which took him so long a time, and in which he employed so many hands, was a standing warning to them. All the blows of the hammer and axe, during the progress of that building, were so many calls and warnings to the old world, to take care for their preservation from the approaching destruction. Every knock of the workmen was a knock of Jesus Christ at the door of their hearts: but they would not hearken. All these warnings, though repeated every day, and continued for so long a time, availed nothing.

Now, is it not much so with you, as it was with them? How often have you been warned! How have you heard the warning knocks of the gospel, Sabbath after Sabbath, for these many years! Yet how have some of you no more regarded them than the inhabitants of the old world regarded the noise of the workmen's tools in Noah's ark!

Objection. But here possibly it may be objected by some, that though it be true they have often been told of hell, yet they never saw any thing of it, and therefore they cannot realize it that there is any such place. They have often heard of hell, and are told that wicked men, when they die, go to a most dreadful place of torment; that hereafter there will be a day of judgment, and that the world will be consumed by fire. But how do they know that it is really so? How do they know what becomes of those wicked men that die? None of them come back to tell them. They have nothing to depend on but the word which they hear. And how do they know that all is not a cunningly-devised fable?

Answer. The sinners of the old world had the very same objection against what Noah told them of a flood about to drown the world. Yet the bare word of God proved to be sufficient evidence that such a thing was coming. What was the reason that none of the many millions then upon earth believed what Noah said, but this, that it was a strange thing, that no such thing had ever before been known? And what a strange story must that of Noah have appeared to them, wherein he told them of a deluge of waters above the tops of the mountains! Therefore it. is said, Heb. 11:7, that "Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet." It is probable, none could conceive how it could be that the whole world should be drowned in a flood of waters; and all were ready to ask, where there was water enough for it; and by what means it should be brought upon the earth. Noah did not tell them how it should be brought to pass; he only told them that God had said that it should be: and that proved to be enough. The event showed their folly in not depending on the mere word of God, who was able, who knew how to bring it to pass, and who could not lie.

In like manner the word of God will prove true, in threatening a flood of eternal wrath to overwhelm all the wicked. You will believe it when the event shall prove it, when it shall be too late to profit by the belief. The

word of God will never fail; nothing is so sure as that: heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. It is firmer than mountains of brass. At the end, the vision will speak and not lie. The decree shall bring forth, and all wicked men shall know that God is the Lord, that he is a God of truth, and that they are fools who will not depend on his word. The wicked of the old world counted Noah a fool for depending so much on the word of God, as to put himself to all the fatigue and expense of building the ark; but the event showed that they themselves were the fools, and that he was wise.

2. Consider that the Spirit of God will not always strive with you; nor will his long suffering always wait upon you. So God said concerning the inhabitants of the old world, Gen. 4:3 "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." All this while God was striving with them. It was a day of grace with them, and God's long-suffering all this while waited upon them: 1 Peter 3:20, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." All this while they had an opportunity to escape, if they would but hearken and believe God. Even after the ark was finished, which seems to have been but little before the flood came, still there was an opportunity; the door of the ark stood open for some time. There was some time during which Noah was employed in laying up stores in the ark. Even then it was not too late; the door of the ark yet stood open.- About a week before the flood came, Noah was commanded to begin to gather in the beasts and birds. During this last week still the door of the ark stood open. But on the very day that the flood began to come, while the rain was yet withheld, Noah and his wife, his three sons, and their wives, went into the ark; and we are told, Gen. 7:16, that "God shut him in. Then the day of God's patience was past; the door of the ark was shut; God himself, who shuts and no man opens, shut the door. Then all hope of their escaping the flood was past; it was too late to repent that they had not hearkened to Noah's warnings, and had not entered into the ark while the door stood open.

After Noah and his family had entered into the ark, and God had shut them in, after the windows of heaven were opened, and they saw how the

waters were poured down out of heaven, we may suppose that many of those who were near came running to the door of the ark, knocking, and crying most piteously for entrance. But it was too late; God himself had shut the door, and Noah had no license, and probably no power, to open it. We may suppose, they stood knocking and calling, Open to us, open to us; O let us in; we beg that we may be let in. And probably some of them pleaded old acquaintance with Noah; that they had always been his neighbors, and had even helped him to build the ark. But all was in vain. There they stood till the waters of the flood came, and without mercy swept them away from the door of the ark.

So it will be with you, if you continue to refuse to hearken to the warnings which are given you. Now God is striving with you; now he is warning you of the approaching flood, and calling upon you Sabbath after Sabbath. Now the door of the ark stands open. But God's Spirit will not always strive with you; his long-suffering will not always wait upon you. There is an appointed day of God's patience, which is as certainly limited as it was to the old world. God hath set your bounds, which you cannot pass. Though now warnings are continued in plenty, yet there will be last knocks and last calls, the last that ever you shall hear. When the appointed time shall be elapsed, God will shut the door, and you shall never see it open again; for God shutteth, and no man openeth.-If you improve not your opportunity before that time, you will cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us," Matt. 25:11, and Luke 23:25, &c. While you shall stand at the door with your piteous cries, the flood of God's wrath will come upon you, overwhelm you, and you shall not escape. The tempest shall carry you away without mercy, and you shall be forever swallowed up and lost.

3. Consider how mighty the billows of divine wrath will be when they shall come. The waters of Noah's flood were very great. The deluge was vast; it was very deep; the billows reached fifteen cubits above the highest mountains; and it was an ocean which had no shore; signifying the greatness of that wrath which is coming on wicked men in another world, which will be like a mighty flood of waters overwhelming them, and rising vastly high over their heads, with billows reaching to the very heavens. Those billows will be higher and heavier than mountains on their poor

souls. The wrath of God will be an ocean without shores, as Noah's flood was: it will be misery that will have no end. The misery of the damned in hell can be better represented by nothing, than by a deluge of misery, a mighty deluge of wrath, which will be ten thousand times worse than a deluge of waters; for it will be a deluge of liquid fire, as in the Scriptures it is called a lake of fire and brimstone.-At the end of the world all the wicked shall be swallowed up in a vast deluge of fire, which shall be as great and as mighty as Noah's deluge of water. See 2 Pet. 3:5, 6, 7. After that the wicked will have mighty billows of fire and brimstone eternally rolling over their poor souls, and their miserable tormented bodies. Those billows may be called vast liquid mountains of fire and brimstone. And when one billow shall have gone over their heads, another shall follow, without intermission, giving them no rest day nor night to all eternity.

4. This flood of wrath will probably come upon you suddenly, when you all think little of it, and it shall seem far from you. So the flood came upon the old world. See Matt. 24:36, &c. Probably many of them were surprised in the night by the waters bursting suddenly in at their doors, or under the foundations of their houses, coming in upon them in their beds. For when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the waters, as observed before, burst forth in mighty torrents. To such a sudden surprise of the wicked of the old world in the night, probably that alludes in Job 27:20, "Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night." So destruction is wont to come on wicked men, who hear many warnings of approaching destruction, and yet will not be influenced by them. For "he that is often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1. And "when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. 5:3.

5. If you will not hearken to the many warnings which are given you of approaching destruction, you will be guilty of more than brutish madness. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." They know upon whom they are dependent, and whom they must obey, and act accordingly. But you, so long as you neglect your own salvation, act as if

you knew not God, your Creator and Proprietor, nor your dependence upon him. The very beasts, when they see signs of an approaching storm, will betake themselves to their dens for shelter. Yet you, when abundantly warned of the approaching storm of divine vengeance, will not fly to the hiding-place from the storm, and the covert from the tempest. The sparrow, the swallow, and other birds, when they are forewarned of approaching winter, will betake themselves to a safer climate. Yet you who have been often forewarned of the piercing blasts of divine wrath, will not, in order to escape them, enter into the New Jerusalem, of most mild and salubrious air, though the gate stands wide open to receive you. The very ants will be diligent in summer to lay up for winter: yet you will do nothing to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Balaam's ass would not run upon a drawn sword, though his master, for the sake of gain, would expose himself to the sword of God's wrath; and so God made the dumb ass, both in words and actions, to rebuke the madness of the prophet, 1 Pet. ii. 16. In like manner, you, although you have been oft warned that the sword of God's wrath is drawn against you, and will certainly be thrust through you, if you proceed in your present course, still proceed, regardless of the consequence.

So God made the very beasts and birds of the old world to rebuke the madness of the men of that day: for they, even all sorts of them, fled to the ark while the door was yet open: which the men of that day refused to do; God hereby, thus signifying, that their folly was greater than that of the very brute creatures.-Such folly and madness are you guilty of; who refuse to hearken to the warnings that are given you of the approaching flood of the wrath of God.

You have been once more warned to-day, while the door of the ark yet stands open. You have, as it were, once again heard the knocks of the hammer and axe in the building of the ark, to put you in mind that a flood is approaching. Take heed therefore that you do not still stop your ears, treat these warnings with a regardless heart, and still neglect the great work which you have to do lest the flood of wrath suddenly come upon you, sweep you away, and there be no remedy.

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Pardon for the Greatest Sinners

"For thy name's sale, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." [Psalm 25:11]

It is evident by some passages in this psalm, that when it was penned, it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verses: "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net," etc. His distress makes him think of his sins, and leads him to confess them, and to cry to God for pardon, as is suitable in a time of affliction. See ver. 7. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;" and verse 18. "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

It is observable in the text, what arguments the psalmist makes use of in pleading for pardon.

1. He pleads for pardon *for God's name's sake.* He has no expectation of pardon for the sake of any righteousness or worthiness of his for any good deeds he had done, or any compensation he had made for his sins; though if man's righteousness could be a just plea, David would have had as much to plead as most. But he begs that God would do it for his own name's sake, for his own glory, for the glory of his own free grace, and for the honour of his own covenant-faithfulness.

2. The psalmist pleads *the greatness of his sins* as an argument for mercy. He not only doth not plead his own righteousness, or the smallness of his sins; he not only cloth not say, Pardon mine iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it; or, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is small, and thou hast no great reason to be angry with me; mine iniquity is not so great, that thou hast any just cause to remember it

against me; mine offence is not such but that thou mayest well enough overlook i': but on the contrary he says, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great; he* pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it; the enforces his prayer with this consideration, that his sins are very heinous.

But how could he make this a plea for pardon? I answer, Because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable, unless thou be pleased to pardon me. He makes use of the greatness of his sin, to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case?—And God allows such a plea as this: for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need his pity.

DOCTRINE

***If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon.*—If it were an impediment, David would never have used it as a plea for pardon, as we find he does in the text.—The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:**

I. That we should see *our misery,* and be *sensible* of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy, that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction: therefore men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable; and so, unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath; that the law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it: that the wrath of God abideth

on them; and that he is angry' with them every day while they are under the guilt of sin.—They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God; that it is a very awful thing to have him for their enemy; and that they cannot bear his wrath. They must he sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength, and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for any thing that any one else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them.

II. They must be sensible that they *are not worthy* that God should have mercy on them. They who truly come to God for mercy, come as beggars, and not as creditors: they come for mere mercy. for sovereign grace, and not for any thing that is due. Therefore, they must see that the misery under which they lie is justly brought upon them, and that the wrath to which they are exposed is *justly* threatened against them; and that they have *deserved* that God should *be* their enemy, and should *continue* to be their enemy. They must be sensible that it would be just with God to do as he hath threatened in his holy law, viz. make them the objects of his wrath and curse in hell to all eternity.— They who come to God for mercy in a right manner are not disposed to find fault with his severity; but they come in a sense of their own utter unworthiness, as with ropes about their necks, and lying in the dust at the foot of mercy.

III. They must come to God for mercy in and *through Jesus Christ* alone. All their hope of mercy must be from the consideration of what he is, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered; and that there is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, but that of Christ; that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that he is so worthy, that all sinners who are in him may well be pardoned and accepted.—It is impossible that any should *come* to God for mercy, and at the same time have no *hope of* mercy. Their coming to God for it, implies that they have some hope of obtaining, otherwise they would not think it worth the

while to come. But they that come in a right manner have all their hope through Christ, or from the consideration of his redemption, and the sufficiency of it.—If persons thus come to God for mercy, the greatness of their sins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their sins be ever so many, and great, and aggravated, it will not make God in the least degree more backward to pardon them. This may be made evident by the following considerations:

1. *The mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least; and that because his mercy is infinite. That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is small. Thus God being infinitely great, he is as much above kings as he is above beggars; he is as much above the highest angel, as he is above the meanest worm. One finite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another.—So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of all sin, as of one. If one of the least sins be not beyond the mercy of God, so neither are the greatest, or ten thousand of them.—However, it must be acknowledged, that this alone doth not prove the doctrine. For though the mercy of God may be as sufficient for the pardon of great sins as others; yet there may be other obstacles, besides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be sufficient, and yet the other attributes may oppose the dispensation of mercy in these cases.—Therefore I observe,

2. That the *satisfaction of Christ is* as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt, as the least: 1 John i. 7. " The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." Acts xiii. 39. " By him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true who tells us so; and if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible, that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto him for it. God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honour of his holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer him to give the least countenance to sin, but

inclines him to give proper testimonies of his hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner, and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence of sin, that he poured out his wrath on his own dear Son, when he took the guilt of it upon himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been so great a testimony of it.

God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner* without any prejudice to the honour of his majesty. The honour of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction; but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honourable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice. The justice of God, as the supreme Govemor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge must judge the world according to a rule of justice. God doth not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign; therefore his exercise of mercy as a sovereign, and his justice as a judge, must be made consistent one with another; and this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully, and justice answered. Rom. iii. 25, 26. " Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy: for Christ hath fulfilled the law, he hath borne the curse of it, in his sufferings; Gal. iii. 13. " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

3. Christ *will no! refuse* to save the greatest sinners, who in a right manner come to God for mercy; for this is his work. It is his business to be a Saviour of sinners; it is the work upon which he came into the world; and therefore he will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. ix. 13. Sin is the very evil

which he came into the world to remedy: therefore he will not object to any man that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ.—The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world; this is the very misery from which he came to deliver men. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered; " They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," Matt. ix. 12. The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him, that he stands in great need of his help. If a physician of compassion comes among the sick and wounded, surely he will not refuse to heal those that stand in most need of healing, if he be able to heal them.

4. Herein cloth the *glory of grace* by the redemption of Christ much consist, viz. in its sufficiency for the pardon of the greatest sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on his heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is, that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders. The greater the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: Rom. v. 20. " Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occasion: 1 Tim. i. 13. " Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified, in that he proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that his blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that he is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that he redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honour of Christ to save the greatest sinners, when they come to him, as it is the honour of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners, if they come to him; for he will not be backward to glorify himself, and to commend the value and virtue of his own blood. Seeing he hath so laid out himself to redeem sinners, he will not be unwilling to show, that he is able to redeem to the uttermost.

5. Pardon is as much *offered and promised* to the greatest sinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the gospel are always in universal terms: as, Ho, every one that thirsteth; Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and, Whosoever will, let him come. And the voice of Wisdom is to men in general: Prov. viii. 4. " Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to moral men, or religious men, but to you, O *men*. *So* Christ promises, John vi. 37. " Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This is the direction of Christ to his apostles, after his resurrection, Mark xvi. 15, 16. " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Which is agreeable to what the apostle saith, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. i. 23.

APPLICATION

The proper *use* of this subject is, to encourage sinners whose consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, immediately to go to God through Christ for mercy. If you go in the manner we have described, the arms of mercy are open to embrace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming because of your sins, let them be ever so black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your souls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned souls in hell; yet if you come to God for mercy, sensible of your own vileness, and seeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in Christ, you would not need to be afraid; the greatness of your sins would be no impediment to your pardon. Therefore, if your souls be burdened, and you are distressed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden and distress any longer. If you are but *willing, you* may freely come and unload yourselves, and cast all your burdens on Christ, and rest in him.

But here I shall speak to some OBJECTIONS which some awakened sinners may be ready to make against what I now exhort them to.

I. Some may be ready to object, I have spent my youth and all the best of my life in sin, and I am afraid God will not accept of me, when I offer him only mine old age.—To this I would answer, 1.

Hath God said any where, that he will not accept of *old sinners* who come to him? God hath often made offers and promises in universal terms; and is there any such exception put in? Doth Christ say, All that thirst, let them come to me and drink, *except* old sinners? Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, except old sinners, and I will give you rest? Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, if he be not an old sinner? Did you ever read any such exception any where in the Bible? and why should you give way to exceptions which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the word of God?—Indeed it is more rare that old sinners are willing to come, than others; but if they do come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

2. When God accepts of young persons, it is not for the sake of the service which they are like to do him afterwards, or because youth is better worth accepting than old age. You seem entirely to mistake the matter, in thinking that God will not accept of you because you are old; as though he readily accepted of persons in their youth, because their youth is better worth his acceptance; whereas it is only for the sake of Jesus Christ, that God is willing to accept of any.

You say, your life is almost spent, and you are afraid that the best time for serving God is past; and that therefore God will not now accept of you; as if it were for the sake of the service which persons are like to do him, after they are converted, that he accepts of them. But a self-righteous spirit is at the bottom of such objections. Men cannot get off from the notion, that it is for some goodness or service of their own, either done or expected to be done, that God accepts of persons, and receives them into favour.—Indeed they who deny God their youth, the best part of their lives, and spend it in the service of Satan, dreadfully sin and provoke God; and he very often leaves them to hardness of heart when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept of Christ when old, he is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God hath respect only to Christ and his worthiness.

II. But, says one, I fear I have committed sins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have sinned against light, and strong convictions of conscience; I have sinned presumptuously; and have so resisted the

strivings of the Spirit of God, that I am afraid I have committed such sins as none of God's elect ever commit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom he intends to save, to go on and commit sins against so much light and conviction, and with such horrid presumption.—Others may say, I have had risings of heart against God; blasphemous thoughts, a spiteful and malicious spirit; and have abused mercy and the strivings of the Spirit, trampled upon the Saviour, and my sins are such as are peculiar to those who are reprobated to eternal damnation. To all this I would answer,

1. There is no sin peculiar to reprobates but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Do you read of any other in the word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any such thing? What other rule have we, by which to judge of such matters, but the divine word? If we venture to go beyond that, we shall be miserably in the dark. When we pretend to go further in our determinations than the word of God, Satan takes us up, and leads us. It seems to you that such sins are peculiar to the reprobate, and such as God never forgives. But what reason can you give for it, if you have no word of God to reveal it? Is it because you cannot see how the mercy of God is sufficient to pardon, or the blood of Christ to cleanse from such presumptuous sins? If so, it is because you never yet saw how great the mercy of God is; you never saw the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. Some elect persons have been guilty of all manner of sins, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; and unless you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

2. Men may be less likely to believe, for sins which they have committed, and not the less readily pardoned when they do believe. It must be acknowledged that some sinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, some are less likely to be saved. Some are less likely ever to be converted and to come to Christ: but all who do come to him are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Christ as another.—Such sins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in an especial manner bring the soul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given to final hardness of heart; and God more commonly gives

men up to the judgment of final hardness for such sins, than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one sin that is so, viz. that against the Holy Ghost. And notwithstanding the sins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Christ, and close with him, you will be accepted not at all the less readily because you have committed such sins.—Though God cloth more rarely cause some sorts of sinners to come to Christ than others, it is not because his mercy or the redemption of Christ is not as sufficient for them as others, but because in wisdom he sees fit so to dispense his grace, for a restraint upon the wickedness of men; and because it is his will to give converting grace in the use of means, among which this is one, viz. to lead a moral and religious life, and agreeable to our light, and the convictions of our consciences. But when once any sinner is willing to come to Christ, mercy is as ready for him as for any. There is no consideration at all had of his sins; let him have been ever so sinful, his sins are not remembered; God doth not upbraid him with them.

III. But had I not better stay till I shall have made myself better, before I presume to come to Christ. I have been, and see myself to be very wicked now; but am in hopes of mending myself, and rendering myself at least not so wicked: then I shall have more courage to come to God for mercy.—In answer to this,

1. Consider how unreasonably you act. You are striving to set up yourselves for your own saviours; you are striving to get something of your own, on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. So that by this it appears that you do not seek to be accepted only on Christ's account. And is not this to rob Christ of the glory of being your only Saviour? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Christ willing to save you.

2. You can never come to Christ at all, unless you first see that he will not accept of you the more readily for any thing that you can do. You must first see, that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourselves better on any such account. You must see that you can never make yourselves any more worthy, or less unworthy, by any thing which you can perform.

3. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must see that there is enough in him for your pardon, though you be no better than you are. If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement, that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness, and God's mercy.

4. If ever you truly come to Christ, you must come to him to make you better. You must come as a patient comes to his physician, with his diseases or wounds to be cured. Spread all your wickedness before him, and do not plead your goodness; but plead your badness, and your necessity on that account: and say, as the psalmist in the text, not Pardon mine iniquity, for it is not so great as it was, but, " Pardon mine iniquity, for it is Great."

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Pressing into the Kingdom of God

"The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." [Luke 16:16]

In these words two things may be observed:

First, Wherein the work and office of John the Baptist consisted, viz. in preaching the kingdom of God, to prepare the way for its introduction to succeed the law and the prophets.

By the law and the prophets, in the text, seems to be intended the ancient dispensation under the Old Testament, which was received from Moses and the prophets. These are said to be until John; not that the revelations given by them are out of use since that time, but that the state of the church, founded and regulated under God by them, the dispensation of which they were the ministers, and wherein the church depended mainly on light received from them, fully continued till John. He first began to introduce the New Testament dispensation, or gospel-state of the church; which, with its glorious, spiritual, and eternal privileges and blessings, is often called the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. John the Baptist preached, that the kingdom of God was at hand. "Repent" says he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:"-"Since that time," says Christ, "the kingdom of God is preached." John the Baptist first began to preach it; and then, after him, Christ and his disciples preached the same.

Thus Christ preached, Matthew 4:17. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So the disciples were directed to preach, Matthew 10:7. "And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was not John the Baptist, but Christ, that fully brought in, and actually established, this kingdom of God; but he, as Christ's forerunner to prepare his way before him, did the first thing that was done towards introducing it. The old dispensation was abolished, and the new brought in by degrees; as the night gradually ceases, and gives place to the increasing day which succeeds in its room.

First the day-star arises; next follows the light of the sun itself, but dimly reflected, in the dawning of the day; but this light increases, and shines more and more, and the stars that served for light during the foregoing night, gradually go out, and their light ceases, as being now needless, till at length the sun rises, and enlightens the world by his own direct light, which increases as he ascends higher above the horizon, till the day-star itself gradually disappears; agreeable to what John says of himself, John 3:30. "He must increase, but I must decrease." John was the forerunner of Christ, and harbinger of the gospel-day; much as the morning-star is the forerunner of the sun. He had the most honorable office of any of the prophets; the other prophets foretold Christ to come, he revealed him as already come, and had the honour to be that servant who should come

immediately before him, and actually introduce him, and even to be the instrument concerned in his solemn inauguration, as he was in baptizing him. He was the greatest of the prophets that came before Christ, as the morning-star is the brightest of all the stars, Matthew 11:11. He came to prepare men's hearts to receive that kingdom of God which Christ was about more fully to reveal and erect. Luke 1:17. "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Secondly, We may observe wherein his success appeared, viz. in that since he began his ministry, every man pressed into that kingdom of God which he preached. The greatness of his success appeared in two things:

1. In the generalness of it, with regard to the subject, or the persons in whom the success appeared; every man. Here is a term of universality; but it is not to be taken as universal with regard to individuals, but kinds; as such universal terms are often used in Scripture. When John preached, there was an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God that attended his preaching. An uncommon awakening, and concern for salvation, appeared on the minds of all sorts of persons; and even in the most unlikely persons, and those from whom such a thing might least be expected; as the Pharisees, who were exceeding proud, and self-sufficient, and conceited of their own wisdom and righteousness, and looked on themselves fit to be teachers of others, and used to scorn to be taught; and the Sadducees, who were a kind of infidels, that denied any resurrection, angel, spirit, or any future state. So that John himself seems to be surprised to see them come to him, under such concern for their salvation; as in Matthew 3:7. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees come to his baptism, he said to them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And besides these, the publicans, who were some of the most infamous sort of men, came to him, inquiring what they should do to be saved. And the soldiers, who were doubtless a very profane, loose, and prolifigate sort of persons, made the same inquiry, Luke 3:12, and 14. "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?

2. His success appeared in the manner in which his hearers sought the

kingdom of God; they pressed into it. It is elsewhere set forth by their being violent for the kingdom of heaven, and taking it by force. Matthew 11:12. "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

The Doctrine that I observe from the words is this,- "It concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to be pressing into it." -In discoursing of this subject, I would,

First, Show what is that way of seeking salvation that seems to be pointed forth in the expression of pressing into the kingdom of God.

Secondly, Give the reasons why it concerns every one that would obtain the kingdom of God, to seek it in this way.- And then make application.

I. I would show what manner of seeking salvation seems to be denoted by "pressing into the kingdom of God."

1. This expression denotes strength of desire. Men in general who live under the light of the gospel, and are not atheists, desire the kingdom of God; that is, they desire to go to heaven rather than to hell. Most of them indeed are not much concerned about it; but on the contrary, live a secure and careless life. And some who are many degrees above these, being under some degrees of the awakenings of God's Spirit, yet are not pressing into the kingdom of God. But they that may be said to be truly so, have strong desires to get out of a natural condition, and to get an interest in Christ. They have such a conviction of the misery of their present state, and of the extreme necessity of obtaining a better, that their minds are as it were possessed with and wrapped up in concern about it.

To obtain salvation is desired by them above all things in the world. This concern is so great that it very much shuts out other concerns. They used before to have the stream of their desires after other things, or, it may be, had their concern divided between this and them; but when they come to answer the expression of the text, of pressing into the kingdom of God, this concern prevails above all others; it lays other things low, and does in

a manner engross the care of the mind. This seeking eternal life should not only be one concern that our souls are taken up about with other things; but salvation should be sought as the one thing needful, Luke 10:42. And as the one thing that is desired, Psalm 27:4.

2. Pressing into the kingdom of heaven denotes earnestness and firmness of resolution. There should be strength of resolution, accompanying strength of desire, as it was in the psalmist, in the place just now referred to: "one thing have I desired, and that will I seek after." In order to a thorough engagedness of the mind in this affair, both these must meet together. Besides desires after salvation, there should be an earnest resolution in persons to pursue this good as much as lies in their power; to do all that in the use of their utmost strength they are able to do, in an attendance on every duty, and resisting and militating against all manner of sin, and to continue in such a pursuit.

There are two things needful in a person, in order to these strong resolutions; there must be a sense of the great importance and necessity of the mercy sought, and there must also be a sense of opportunity to obtain it, or the encouragement there is to seek it. The strength of resolution depends on the sense which God gives to the heart of these things. Persons without such a sense, may seem to themselves to take up resolutions; they may, as it were, force a promise to themselves, and say within themselves, "I will seek as long as I live, I will not give up till I obtain," when they do but deceive themselves. Their hearts are not in it; neither do they indeed take up any such resolution as they seem to themselves to do. It is the resolution of the mouth more than of the heart; their hearts are not strongly bent to fulfill what their mouth says. The firmness of the resolution lies in the fulness of the disposition of the heart to do what is resolved to be done. Those who are pressing into the kingdom of God, have a disposition of heart to do everything that is required, and that lies in their power to do, and to continue in it. They have not only earnestness, but steadiness of resolution: they do not seek with a wavering unsteady heart, by turns or fits, being off and on; but it is the constant bent of the soul, if possible, to obtain the kingdom of God.

3. By pressing into the kingdom of God is signified greatness of endeavor. It is expressed in Ecclesiastes 10:10. by doing what our hand finds to do

with our might. And this is the natural and necessary consequence of the two forementioned things. Where there is strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, there will be answerable endeavors. Persons thus engaged in their hearts will "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and will be violent for heaven; their practice will be agreeable to the counsel of the wise man, in Proverbs 2 at the beginning, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Here the earnestness of desire and strength of resolution is signified by inclining the ear to wisdom, and applying the heart to understanding; and the greatness of endeavor is denoted by crying after knowledge, and lifting up the voice for understanding; seeking her as silver, and searching for her as for hid treasures: such desires and resolutions, and such endeavors go together.

4. Pressing into the kingdom of God denotes an engagedness and earnestness, that is directly about that business of getting into the kingdom of God. Persons may be in very great exercise and distress of mind, and that about the condition of their souls; their thoughts and cares may be greatly engaged and taken up about things of a spiritual nature, and yet not be pressing into the kingdom of God, nor towards it. The exercise of their minds is not directly about the work of seeking salvation, in a diligent attendance on the means that God hath appointed in order to it, but something else that is beside their business; it may be God's decrees and secret purposes, prying into them, searching for signs whereby they may determine, or at least conjecture, what they are before God makes them known by their accomplishment. They distress their minds with fears that they be not elected, or that they have committed the unpardonable sin, or that their day is past, and that God has given them up to judicial and final hardness, and never intends to show them mercy; and therefore, that it is in vain for them to seek salvation. Or they entangle themselves about the doctrine of original sin, and other mysterious doctrines of religion that are above their comprehension.

Many persons that seem to be in great distress about a future eternal state, get much into a way of perplexing themselves with such things as these. When it is so, let them be never so much concerned and engaged in their minds, they cannot be said to be pressing towards the kingdom of God: because their exercise is not in their work, but rather that which tends to hinder them in their work. If they are violent, they are only working violently to entangle themselves, and lay blocks in their own way; their pressure is not forwards. Instead of getting along, they do but lose their time, and worse than merely lose it; instead of fighting with the giants that stand in the way to keep them out of Canaan, they spend away their time and strength in conflicting with shadows that appear by the wayside.

Hence we are not to judge of the hopefulness of the way that persons are in, or of the probability of their success in seeking salvation, only by the greatness of the concern and distress that they are in; for many persons have needless distresses that they had much better be without. It is thus very often with persons overrun with the distemper of melancholy: whence the adversary of souls is wont to take great advantage. But then are persons in the most likely way to obtain the kingdom of heaven, when the intent of their minds, and the engagedness of their spirits, be about their proper work and business, and all the bent of their souls is to attend on God's means, and to do what he commands and directs them to. The apostle tells us, I Corinthians 9:26. "that he did not fight as those that beat the air." Our time is short enough; we had not need to spend it in that which is nothing to the purpose. There are real difficulties and enemies enough for persons to encounter, to employ all their strength; they had not need to waste it in fighting with phantoms.

5. By pressing into the kingdom of God is denoted a breaking through opposition and difficulties. There is in the expression a plain intimation of difficulty. If there were no opposition, but the way was all clear and open, there would be no need of pressing to get along. They therefore that are pressing into the kingdom of God, go on with such engagedness, that they break through the difficulties that are in the way. They are so set for salvation, that those things by which others are discouraged, and stopped, and turned back, do not stop them, but they press through them.

Persons ought to be so resolved for heaven, that if by any means they can obtain, they will obtain. Whether those means be difficult or easy, cross or agreeable, if they are requisite means of salvation, they should be complied with. When anything is presented to be done, the question should not be, Is it easy or hard? is it agreeable to my carnal inclinations or interest, or against them? But is it a required means of my obtaining an interest in Jesus Christ, and eternal salvation? Thus the apostle, Philippians 3:11. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He tells us there in the context what difficulties he broke through, that he suffered the loss of all things, and was willingly made conformable even to Christ's death, though that was attended with such extreme torment and ignominy.

He that is pressing into the kingdom of God, commonly finds many things in the way that are against the grain; but he is not stopped by the cross that lies before him, but takes it up, and carries it. Suppose there be something incumbent on him to do, that is cross to his natural temper, and irksome to him on that account; suppose something that he cannot do without suffering in his estate, or that he apprehends will look odd and strange in the eyes of others, and expose him to ridicule and reproach, or any thing that will offend a neighbor, and get his ill-will, or something that will be very cross to his own carnal appetite-he will press through such difficulties. Everything that is found to be a weight that hinders him in running this race he casts from him, though it be a weight of gold or pearls; yea, if it be a right hand or foot that offends him, he will cut them off, and will not stick at plucking out a right eye with his own hands. These things are insuperable difficulties to those who are not thoroughly engaged in seeking their salvation; they are stumbling-blocks that they never get over. But it is not so with him that presses into the kingdom of God. Those things (before he was thoroughly roused from his security) about which he was wont to have long parleyings and disputings with his own conscience-employing carnal reason to invent arguments and pleas of excuse-he now sticks at no longer; he has done with this endless disputing and reasoning, and presses violently through all difficulties.

Let what will be in the way, heaven is what he must and will obtain, not if he can without difficulty, but if it be possible. He meets with temptation:

the devil is often whispering in his ear, setting allurements before him, magnifying the difficulties of the work he is engaged in, telling him that they are insuperable, and that he can never conquer them, and trying all ways in the world to discourage him; but still he presses forward. God has given and maintains such an earnest spirit for heaven, that the devil cannot stop him in his course; he is not at leisure to lend an ear to what he has to say.-I come now,

1. To show why the kingdom of heaven should be sought in this manner.-It should be thus sought,

1. On account of the extreme necessity we are in of getting into the kingdom of heaven. We are in a perishing necessity of it; without it we are utterly and eternally lost. Out of the kingdom of God is no safety; there is no other hiding-place; this is the only city of refuge, in which we can be secure from the avenger that pursues all the ungodly. The vengeance of God will pursue, overtake, and eternally destroy, them that are not in this kingdom. All that are without this enclosure will be swallowed up in an overflowing fiery deluge of wrath. They may stand at the door and knock, and cry, Lord, Lord, open to us, in vain; they will be thrust back; and God will have no mercy on them; they shall be eternally left of him. His fearful vengence will seize them; the devils will lay hold of them; and all evil will come upon them; and there will be none to pity or help; their case will be utterly desperate, and infinitely doleful. It will be a gone case with them; all offers of mercy and expressions of divine goodness will be finally withdrawn, and all hope will be lost. God will have no kind of regard to their well-being; will take no care of them to save them from any enemy, or any evil; but himself will be their dreadful enemy, and will execute wrath with fury, and will take vengeance in an inexpressibly dreadful manner. Such as shall be in this case will be lost and undone indeed! They will be sunk down into perdition, infinitely below all that we can think. For who knows the power of God's anger? And who knows the misery of that poor worm, on whom that anger is executed without mercy?

2. On account of the shortness and uncertainty of the opportunity for getting into this kingdom. When a few days are past, all our opportunity for it will be gone. Our day is limited. God has set our bounds, and we

know not where. While persons are out of this kingdom, they are in danger every hour of being overtaken with wrath. We know not how soon we shall get past that line, beyond which there is no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom; and therefore we should do what we have to do with our might, Ecclesiastes 9:10.

3. On account of the difficulty of getting into the kingdom of God. There are innumerable difficulties in the way; such as few conquer: most of them that try have not resolution, courage, earnestness, and constancy enough; but they fail, give up, and perish. The difficulties are too many and too great for them that do not violently press forward. They never get along, but stick by the way; are turned aside, or turned back, and ruined. Matthew 7:14. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Luke 13:24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

4. The possibility of obtaining. Though it be attended with so much difficulty, yet it is not a thing impossible. Acts 8:22. "If perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." II Timothy 2:25. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." However sinful a person is, and whatever his circumstances are, there is, notwithstanding, a possibility of his salvation. He himself is capable of it, and God is able to accomplish it, and has mercy sufficient for it; and there is sufficient provision made through Christ, that God may do it consistent with the honour of his majesty, justice, and truth. So that there is no want either of sufficiency in God, or capacity in the sinner, in order to this. The greatest and vilest most blind, dead, hard-hearted sinner living, is a subject capable of saving light and grace. Seeing therefore there is such a necessity of obtaining the kingdom of God, and so short a time, and such difficulty, and yet such a possibility, it may well induce us to press into it. Jonah 3:8, 9.

5. It is meet that the kingdom of heaven should be thus sought, because of the great excellency of it. We are willing to seek earthly things, of trifling value, with great diligence, and through much difficulty; it therefore certainly becomes us to seek that with great earnestness which is of infinitely greater worth and excellence. And how well may God expect

and require it of us, that we should seek it in such a manner, in order to our obtaining it!

6. Such a manner of seeking is needful to prepare persons for the kingdom of God. Such earnestness and thoroughness of endeavors, is the ordinary means that God makes use of to bring persons to an acquaintance with themselves, to a sight of their own hearts, to a sense of their own helplessness, and to a despair in their own strength and righteousness. And such engagedness and constancy in seeking the kingdom of heaven, prepare the soul to receive it the more joyfully and thankfully, and the more highly to prize and value it when obtained. So that it is in mercy to us, as well as for the glory of his own name, that God has appointed such earnest seeking, to be the way in which he will bestow the kingdom of heaven.

APPLICATION

The use I would make of this doctrine, is of exhortation to all Christless persons to press into the kingdom of God. Some of you are inquiring what you shall do? You seem to desire to know what is the way wherein salvation is to be sought, and how you may be likely to obtain it. You have now heard the way that the holy word of God directs to. Some are seeking, but it cannot be said of them that they are pressing into the kingdom of heaven. There are many that in time past have sought salvation, but not in this manner, and so they never obtained, but are now gone to hell. Some of them sought it year after year, but failed of it, and perished at last. They were overtaken with divine wrath, and are now suffering the fearful misery of damnation, and have no rest day nor night, having no more opportunity to seek, but must suffer and be miserable throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Be exhorted, therefore, not to seek salvation as they did, but let the kingdom of heaven suffer violence from you.

Here I would first answer an objection or two, and then proceed to give some directions how to press into the kingdom of God.

Objection. 1. Some may be ready to say, We cannot do this of ourselves; that strength of desire, and firmness of resolution, that have been spoken

of, are out of our reach. If I endeavor to resolve and to seek with engagedness of spirit, I find I fail; my thoughts are presently off from the business, and I feel myself dull, and my engagedness relaxed, in spite of all I can do.

Answer. 1. Though earnestness of mind be not immediately in your power, yet the consideration of what has been now said of the need of it, may be a means of stirring you up to it. It is true, persons never will be thoroughly engaged in this business, unless it be by God's influence; but God influences persons by means. Persons are not stirred up to a thorough earnestness without some considerations that move them to it. And if persons can but be made sensible of the necessity of salvation, and also duly consider the exceeding difficuly of it, and the greatness of the opposition, and how short and uncertain the time is, but yet are sensible that they have an opportunity, and that there is a possibility of their obtaining, they will need no more in order to their being thoroughly engaged and resolved in this matter. If we see persons slack and unresolved, and unsteady, it is because they do not enough consider these things.

2. Though strong desires and resolutions of mind be not in your power, yet painfulness of endeavors is in your power. It is in your power to take pains in the use of means, yea very great pains. You can be very painful and diligent in watching your own heart, and striving against sin. Though there is all manner of corruption in the heart continually ready to work, yet you can very laboriously watch and strive against these corruptions; and it is in your power, with great diligence to attend the matter of your duty towards God and towards your neighbour. It is in your power to attend all ordinances, and all public and private duties of religion, and to do it with your might. It would be a contradiction to suppose that a man cannot do these things with all the might he has, though he cannot do them with more might than he has. The dullness and deadness of the heart, and slothfulness of disposition, do not hinder men being able to take pains, though it hinders their being willing. That is one thing wherein your laboriousness may appear, even striving against your own dullness. That men have a dead and sluggish heart, does not argue that they be not able to take pains; it is so far from that, that it gives occasion

for pains. It is one of the difficulties in the way of duty, that persons have to strive with, and that gives occasion for struggling and labour. If there were no difficulties attended seeking salvation, there would be no occasion for striving; a man would have nothing to strive about. There is indeed a great deal of difficulty attending all duties required of those that would obtain heaven. It is an exceeding difficult thing for them to keep their thoughts; it is a difficult thing seriously, or to any good purpose, to consider matters of greatest importance; it is a difficult thing to hear, or read, or pray attentively. But it does not argue that a man cannot strive in these things because they are difficult; nay, he could not strive therein if there were not difficulty in them. For what is there excepting difficulties that any can have to strive or struggle with in any affair or business? Earnestness of mind, and diligence of endeavor, tend to promote each other. He that has a heart earnestly engaged, will take pains; and he that is diligent and painful in all duty, probably will not be so long before he finds the sensibleness of his heart and earnestness of his spirit greatly increased.

Objection 2. Some may object, that if they are earnest, and take a great deal of pains, they shall be in danger of trusting to what they do; they are afraid of doing their duty for fear of making a righteousness of it.

Answer. There is ordinarily no kind of seekers that trust so much to what they do, as slack and dull seekers. Though all seeking salvation, that have never been the subjects of a thorough humiliation, do trust in their own righteousness; yet some do it much more fully than others. Some though they trust in their own righteousness, yet are not quiet in it. And those who are most disturbed in their self-confidence, (and therefore in the likeliest way to be wholly brought off from it,) are not such as go on in a remiss way of seeking, but such as are most earnest and thoroughly engaged; partly because in such a way conscience is kept more sensible. A more awakened conscience will not rest so quietly in moral and religious duties, as one that is less awakened. A dull seeker's conscience will be in a great measure satisfied and quieted with his own works and performances; but one that is thoroughly awakened cannot be stilled or pacified with such things as these. In this way persons gain much more knowledge of themselves, and acquaintance with their own hearts, than

in a negligent, slight way of seeking; for they have a great deal more experience of themselves. It is experience of ourselves, and finding what we are, that God commonly makes use of as the means of bringing us off from all dependence on ourselves. But men never get acquaintance with themselves so fast, as in the most earnest way of seeking. They that are in this way have more to engage them to think of their sins, and strictly to observe themselves, and have much more to do with their own hearts, than others. Such a one has much more experience of his own weakness, than another that does not put forth and try his strength; and will therefore sooner see himself dead in sin. Such a one, though he hath a disposition continually to be flying to his own righteousness, yet finds rest in nothing; he wanders about from one thing to another, seeking something to ease his disquieted conscience; he is driven from one refuge to another, goes from mountain to hill, seeking rest and finding none; and therefore will the sooner prove that there is no rest to be found, nor trust to be put, in any creature whatsoever.

It is therefore quite a wrong notion that some entertain, that the more they do, the more they shall depend on it. Whereas the reverse is true; the more they do, or the more thorough they are in seeking, the less will they be likely to rest in their doings, and the sooner will they see the vanity of all that they do. So that persons will exceedingly miss it, if ever they neglect to do any duty either to God or man, whether it be any duty of religion, justice, or charity, under a notion of its exposing them to trust in their own righteousness. It is very true, that it is a common thing for persons, when they earnestly seek salvation, to trust in the pains that they take: but yet commonly those that go on in a more slight way, trust a great deal more securely to their dull services, than he that is pressing into the kingdom of God does to his earnestness. Men's slackness in religion, and their trust in their own righteousness, strengthen and establish one another. Their trust in what they have done, and what they now do, settles them in a slothful rest and ease, and hinders their being sensible of their need of rousing up themselves and pressing forward. And on the other hand, their negligence tends so to benumb them in such ignorance of themselves, that the most miserable refuges are stupidly rested in as sufficient. Therefore we see, that when persons have been going on for a long time in such a way, and God afterwards comes more

thoroughly to awaken them, and to stir them up to be in good earnest, he shakes all their old foundations, and rouses them out of their old resting places; so that they cannot quiet themselves with those things that formerly kept them secure. I would now proceed to give some directions how you should press into the kingdom of God.

1. Be directed to sacrifice every thing to your soul's eternal interest. Let seeking this be so much your bent, and what you are so resolved in, that you will make every thing give place to it. Let nothing stand before your resolution of seeking the kingdom of God. Whatever it be that you used to look upon as a convenience, or comfort, or ease, or thing desirable on any account, if it stands in the way of this great concern, let it be dismissed without hesitation; and if it be of that nature that it is likely always to be a hinderance, then wholly have done with it, and never entertain any expectation from it more. If in time past you have, for the sake of worldly gain, involved yourself in more care and business than you find to be consistent with your being so thorough in the business of religion as you ought to be, then get into some other way, though you suffer in your worldly interest by it. Or if you have heretofore been conversant with company that you have reason to think have been and will be a snare to you, and a hinderance to this great design in any wise, break off from their society, however it may expose you to reproach from your old companions, or let what will be the effect of it. Whatever it be that stands in the way of your most advantageously seeking salvation-whether it be some dear sinful pleasure, or strong carnal appetite, or credit and honour, or the good-will of some persons whose friendship you desire, and whose esteem and liking you have highly valued-and though there be danger, if you do as you ought, that you shall looked upon by them as odd and ridiculous, and become contemptible in their eyes-or if it be your ease and indolence and aversion to continual labour; or your outward convenience in any respect, whereby you might avoid difficulties of one kind or other-let all go; offer up all such things together, as it were, in one sacrifice, to the interest of your soul. Let nothing stand in competition with this, but make every thing to fall before it. If the flesh must be crossed, then cross it, spare it not, crucify it, and do not be afraid of being too cruel to it. Galatians 5:24. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Have no dependence on any worldly

enjoyment whatsoever. Let salvation be the one thing with you. This is what is certainly required of you: and this is what many stick at; this giving up other things for salvation, is a stumbling-block that few get over. While others pressed into the kingdom of God at the preaching of John the Baptist, Herod was pretty much stirred up by his preaching. It is said, he heard him, and observed him, and did many things; but when he came to tell him that he must part with his beloved Herodias, here he stuck; this he never would yield to, Mark 7:18-20. The rich young man was considerably concerned for salvation; and accordingly was a very strict liver in many things: but when Christ came to direct him to go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him, he could not find in his heart to comply with it, but went away sorrowful. He had great possessions, and set his heart much on his estate, and could not bear to part with it. It may be, if Christ had directed him only to give away a considerable part of his estate, he would have done it; yea, perhaps, if he had bid him part with half of it, he would have complied with it: but when he directed him to throw up all, he could not grapple with such a proposal. Herein the straitness of the gate very much consists; and it is on this account that so many seek to enter in, and are not able. There are many that have a great mind to salvation, and spend great part of their time in wishing they had it, but they will not comply with the necessary means.

2. Be directed to forget the things that are behind: that is, not to keep thinking and making much of what you have done, but let your mind be wholly intent on what you have to do. In some sense you ought to look back; you should look back to your sins. Jeremiah 2:23. "See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done." You should look back on the wretchedness of your religious performances, and consider how you have fallen short in them; how exceedingly polluted all your duties have been, and how justly God might reject and loathe them, and you for them. But you ought not to spend your time in looking back, as many persons do, thinking how much they have done for their salvation; what great pains they have taken, how that they have done what they can, and do not see how they can do more; how long a time they have been seeking, and how much more they have done than others, and even than such and such who have obtained mercy. They think with themselves how hardly God

deals with them, that he does not extend mercy to them, but turns a deaf ear to their cries; and hence discourage themselves, and complain of God. Do not thus spend your time in looking back on what is past, but look forward, and consider what is before you; consider what it is that you can do, and what it is necessary that you should do, and what God calls you still to do, in order to your own salvation. The apostle, in the third chapter to the Philippians, tells us what things he did while a Jew, how much he had to boast of, if any could boast; but he tells us, that he forgot those things, and all other things that were behind, and reached forth towards the things that were before, pressing forwards towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Labour to get your heart thoroughly disposed to go on and hold out to the end. Many that seem to be earnest have not a heart thus disposed. It is a common thing for persons to appear greatly affected for a little while; but all is soon past away, and there is no more to be seen of it. Labour therefore to obtain a thorough willingness and preparation of spirit, to continue seeking, in the use of your utmost endeavours, without limitation; and do not think your whole life too long. And in order to this, be advised to two things,

(1.) Remember that if ever God bestows mercy upon you, he will use his sovereign pleasure about the time when. He will bestow it on some in a little time, and on others not till they have sought it long. If other persons are soon enlightened and comforted, while you remain long in darkness, there is no other way but for you to wait. God will act arbitrarily in this matter, and you cannot help it. You must even be content to wait, in a way of laborious and earnest striving, till his time comes. If you refuse, you will but undo yourself; and when you shall hereafter find yourself undone, and see that your case is past remedy, how will you condemn yourself for foregoing a great probability of salvation, only because you had not the patience to hold out, and was not willing to be at the trouble of a persevering labour! And what will it avail before God or your own conscience to say, that you could not bear to be obliged to seek salvation so long, when God bestowed it on others that sought it but for a very short time? Though God may have bestowed the testimonies of his favour on others in a few days or hours after they have begun earnestly to seek it,

how does that alter the case as to you, if there proves to be a necessity of your laboriously seeking many years before you obtain them? Is salvation less worth taking a great deal of pains for, because, through the sovereign pleasure of God, others have obtained it with comparatively little pains? If there are two persons, the one of which has obtained converting grace with comparative ease, and another that has obtained it after continuing for many years in the greatest and most earnest labours after it, how little difference does it make at last, when once salvation is obtained! Put all the labour and pains, the long-continued difficulties and strugglings, of the one in the scale against salvation, and how little does it subtract; and put the ease with which the other has obtained in the scale with salvation, and how little does it add! What is either added or subtracted is lighter than vanity, and a thing worthy of no consideration, when compared with that infinite benefit that is obtained. Indeed if you were ten thousand years, and all that time should strive and press forward with as great earnestness as ever a person did for one day, all this would bear no proportion to the importance of the benefit; and it will doubtless appear little to you, when once you come to be in actual possession of eternal glory, and to see what that eternal misery is which you have escaped. You must not think much of your pains, and of the length of time; you must press towards the kingdom of God, and do your utmost, and hold out to the end, and learn to make no account of it when you have done. You must undertake the business of seeking salvation upon these terms, and with no other expectations than this, that if ever God bestows mercy it will be in his own time; and not only so, but also that when you have done all, God will not hold himself obliged to show you mercy at last.

(2.) Endeavour now thoroughly to weigh in your mind the difficulty, and to count the cost of perseverence in seeking salvation. You that are now setting out in this business, (as there are many here who have very lately set about it;-Praised be the name of God that he has stirred you up to it!) be exhorted to attend this direction. Do not undertake in this affair with any other thought but of giving yourself wholly to it for the remaining part of your life, and going through many and great difficulties in it. Take heed that you do not engage secretly upon this condition, that you shall obtain in a little time, promising yourself that it shall be within this present season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, or with any other

limitation of time whatsoever. Many, when they begin, (seeming to set out very earnestly,) do not expect that they shall need to seek very long, and so do not prepare themselves for it. And therefore, when they come to find it otherwise, and meet with unexpected difficulty, they are found unguarded, and easily overthrown. But let me advise you all who are now seeking salvation, not to entertain any self-flattering thoughts; but weigh the utmost difficulties of perseverance, and be provided for them, having your mind fixed in it to go through them, let them be what they will. Consider now beforehand, how tedious it would be, with utmost earnestness and labour, to strive after salvation for many years, in the mean time receiving no joyful or comfortable evidence of your having obtained. Consider what a great temptation to discouragement there probably would be in it; how apt you would be to yield the case; how ready to think that it is in vain for you to seek any longer, and that God never intends to show you mercy, in that he has not yet done it; how apt you would be to think with yourself, "What an uncomfortable life do I live! How much more unpleasantly do I spend my time than others that do not perplex their minds about the things of another world, but are at ease, and take the comfort of their worldly enjoyments!" Consider what a temptation there would probably be in it, if you saw others brought in that began to seek the kingdom of heaven long after you, rejoicing in a hope and sense of God's favour, after but little pains and a short time of awakening; while you, from day to day, and from year to year, seemed to labour in vain. Prepare for such tempations now. Lay in beforehand for such trials and difficulties, that you may not think any strange thing has happened when they come.

I hope that those who have given attention to what has been said, have by this time conceived, in some measure, what is signified by the expression in the text, and after what manner they ought to press into the kingdom of God. Here is this to induce you to a compliance with what you have been directed to; if you sit still, you die; if you go backward, behold you shall surely die; if you go forward, you may live. And though God has not bound himself to any thing that a person does while destitute of faith, and out of Christ, yet there is great probability, that in a way of hearkening to this counsel you will live; and that by pressing onward, and persevering, you will at last, as it were by violence, take the kingdom of heaven. Those

of you who have not only heard the directions given, but shall through God's merciful assistance, practise according to them, are those that probably will overcome. These we may well hope at last to see standing with the Lamb on mount Sion, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands; when all your labour and toil will be abundantly compensated, and you will not repent that you have taken so much pains, and denied yourself much, and waited so long. This self-denial, this waiting, will then look little, and vanish into nothing in your eyes, being all swallowed up in the first minute's enjoyment of that glory that you will then possess, and will uninterruptedly possess and enjoy to all eternity.

4th Direction. Improve the present season of the pouring out of the Spirit of God on this town. Prudence is any affair whatsoever consists very much in minding and improving our opportunities. If you would have spiritual prosperity, you must exercise prudence in the concerns of your souls, as well as in outward concerns when you seek outward prosperity. The prudent husbandman will observe his opportunities; he will improve seed-time and harvest; he will make his advantage of the showers and shines of heaven. The prudent merchant will discern his opportunities; he will not be idle on a market-day; he is careful not to let slip his seasons for enriching himself: So will those who prudently seek the fruits of righteousness, and the merchandise of wisdom, improve their opportunities for their eternal wealth and happiness.

God is pleased at this time, in a very remarkable manner, to pour out his Spirit amongst us; (glory be to his name!) You that have a mind to obtain converting grace, and to go to heaven when you die, now is your season! Now, if you have any sort of prudence for your own salvation, and have not a mind to go to hell, improve this season! Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! You that in time past have been called upon, and have turned a deaf ear to God's voice, and long stood out and resisted his commands and counsels, hear God's voice today, while it is called today! Do not harden your hearts at such a day as this! Now you have a special and remarkable price put into your hands to get wisdom, if you have but a heart to improve it.

God hath his certain days or appointed seasons of exercising both mercy and judgment. There are some remarkable times of wrath, laid out by

God for his awful visitation, and the executions of his anger; which times are called days of vengeance, Proverbs 6:34. Wherein God will visit sin, Exodus 32:34. And so, on the contrary, God has laid out in his sovereign counsels seasons of remarkable mercy, wherein he will manifest himself in the exercises of his grace and loving-kindness, more than at other times. Such times in Scripture are called by way of eminency, accepted times, and days of salvation, and also days of God's visitation; because they are days wherein God will visit in a way of mercy; as in Luke 19:44. "And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." It is such a time now in this town; it is with us a day of God's gracious visitation. It is indeed a day of grace with us as long as we live in this world, in the enjoyment of the means of grace; but such a time as this is especially, and in a distinguishing manner, a day of grace. There is a door of mercy always standing open for sinners; but such a day as this, God opens an extraordinary door.

We are directed to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near, Isaiah 55:6. If you that are hitherto Christless, be not strangely besotted and infatuated, you will by all means improve such an opportunity as this to get heaven, when heaven is brought so near, when the fountain is opened in the midst of us in so extraordinary a manner. Now is the time to obtain a supply of the necessities of your poor perishing souls! This is the day for sinners that have a mind to be converted before they die, when God is dealing forth so liberally and bountifully amongst us; when conversion and salvation work is going on amongst us from sabbath to sabbath, and many are pressing into the kingdom of God! Now do not stay behind, but press in amongst the rest! Others have been stirred up to be in good earnest, and have taken heaven by violence; be entreated to follow their example, if you would have a part of the inheritance with them, and would not be left at the great day, when they are taken!

How should it move you to consider that you have this opportunity now in your hands! You are in the actual possession of it! If it were past, it would not be in your power to recover it, or in the power of any creature to bring it back for you; but it is not past; it is now, at this day. Now is the

accepted time, even while it is called today! Will you sit still at such a time? Will you sleep in such a harvest? Will you deal with a slack hand, and stay behind out of mere sloth, or love to some lust, or lothness to grapple with some small difficulty, or to put yourself a little out of your way, when so many are flowing to the goodness of the Lord? You are behind still; and so you will be in danger of being left behind, when the whole number is completed that are to enter in, if you do not earnestly bestir yourself! To be left behind at the close of such a season as this, will be awful-next to being left behind on that day when God's saints shall mount up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air-and will be what will appear very threatening of it.

God is now calling you in an extraordinary manner: and it is agreeable to the will and word of Christ, that I should now, in his name, call you, as one set over you, and sent to you to that end; so it is his will that you should hearken to what I say, as his voice. I therefore beseech you in Christ's stead now to press into the kingdom of God! Whoever you are, whether young or old, small or great; if you are a great sinner, if you have been a backslider, if you have quenched the Spirit, be who you will, do not stand making objections, but arise, apply yourself to your work! Do what you have to do with your might. Christ is calling you before, and holding forth his grace, and everlasting benefits, and wrath is pursuing you behind; wherefore fly for your life, and look not behind you! But here I would particularly direct myself to several sorts of persons.

I. To those sinners who are in a measure awakened, and are concerned for their salvation. You have reason to be glad that you have such an opportunity, and to prize it above gold. To induce you to prize and improve it, consider several things.

1. God has doubtless a design now to deal forth saving blessings to a number. God has done it to some already, and it is not probable that he has yet finished his work amongst us: we may well hope still to see others brought out of darkness into marvellous light. And therefore,

2. God comes this day, and knocks at many persons' doors, and at your door among the rest. God seems to be come in a very unusual manner amongst us, upon a gracious and merciful design; a design of saving a

number of poor miserable souls out of a lost and perishing condition, and of bringing them into a happy state and eternal glory! This is offered to you, not only as it has always been in the word and ordinances, but by the particular influences of the Spirit of Christ awakening you! This special offer is made to many amongst us; and you are not passed over. Christ has not forgot you; but has come to your door; and there as it were stands waiting for you to open to him. If you have wisdom and discretion to discern your own advantage, you will know that now is your opportunity.

3. How much more easily converting grace is obtained at such a time, than at other times! The work is equally easy with God at all times; but there is far less difficulty in the way as to men at such a time, than at other times. It is, as I said before, a day of God's gracious visitation; a day that he has as it were set apart for the more liberally and bountifully dispensing of his grace; a day wherein God's hand is opened wide. Experience shows it. God seems to be more ready to help, to give proper convictions, to help against temptations, and let in divine light. He seems to carry on his work with a more glorious discovery of his power, and Satan is more chained up than at other times. Those difficulties and temptations that persons before struck at, from year to year, they are soon helped over. The work of God is carried on with greater speed and swiftness, and there are often instances of sudden conversion at such a time. So it was in the apostles' days, when there was a time of the most extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit that ever was. How quick and sudden were conversions in those days! Such instances as that of the jailer abounded then, in fulfillment of that prophecy, Isaiah 66:7, 8. "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." So it is in some degree, whenever there is an extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God; more or less so, in proportion to the greatness of that effusion. There is seldom such quick work made of it at other times. Persons are not so soon delivered from their various temptations and entanglements; but are much longer wandering in a wilderness, and groping in darkness. And yet,

4. There are probably some here present that are now concerned about

their salvation, that will never obtain. It is not to be supposed that all that are now moved and awakened, will ever be savingly converted. Doubtless there are many now seeking that will not be able to enter. When has it been so in times past, when there has been times of great outpourings of God's Spirit, but that many who for a while have inquired with others, what they should do to be saved, have failed, and afterwards grown hard and secure? All of you that are now awakened, have a mind to obtain salvation, and probably hope to get a title to heaven, in the time of this present moving of God's Spirit: but yet, (though it be awful to be spoken, and awful to be thought) we have no reason to think any other, than that some of you will burn in hell to all eternity. You all are afraid of hell, and seem at present disposed to take pains to be delivered from it; and yet it would be unreasonable to think any other, than that some of you will have your portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Though there are so many that seem to obtain so easily, having been but a little while under convictions, yet, for all that, some never will obtain. Some will soon lose the sense of things they now have; though their awakenings seem to be very considerable for the present, they will not hold; they have not hearts disposed to hold on through very many difficulties. Some that have set out for heaven, and hope as much as others to obtain, are indeed but slighty and slack, even now, in the midst of such a time as this. And others, who for the present seem to be more in earnest, will probably, before long, decline and fail, and gradually return to be as they were before. The convictions of some seem to be great, while that which is the occasion of their convictions is new; which, when that begins to grow old, will gradually decay and wear off. Thus, it may be, the occasion of your awakening has been the hearing of the conversion of some person, or seeing so extraordinary a dispensation of Providence as this in which God now appears amongst us; but by and by the newness and freshness of these things will be gone, and so will not affect your mind as now they do; and it may be your convictions will go away with it.

Though this be a time wherein God doth more liberally bestow his grace, and so a time of greater advantage for obtaining it; yet there seems to be, upon some accounts, greater danger of backsliding, than when persons are awakened at other times. For commonly such extraordinary times do not last long; and then when they cease, there are multitudes that lose

their convictions as it were together.
We speak of it as a happy thing, that God is pleased to cause such a time amongst us, and so it is indeed: but there are some to whom it will be no benefit; it will be an occasion of their greater misery; they will wish they had never seen this time; it will be more tolerable for those that never saw it, or any thing like it, in the day of judgment, than for them. It is an awful consideration, that there are probably those here, whom the great Judge will hereafter call to a strict account about this very thing, why they no better improved this opportunity, when he set open the fountain of his grace, and so loudly called upon them, and came and strove with them in particular, by the awakening influences of his Spirit; and they will have no good account to give to the Judge, but their mouths will be stopped, and they will stand speechless before him.
You had need therefore to be earnest, and very resolved in this affair, that you may not be one of those who shall thus fail, that you may so fight, as not uncertainly, and so run, as that you may win the prize.

5. Consider in what sad circumstances times of extraordinary effusion of God's Spirit commonly leave persons, when they leave them unconverted. They find them in a doleful, because in a natural, condition; but commonly leave them in a much more doleful condition. They are left dreadfully hardened, and with a great increase of guilt, and their souls under a more strong dominion and possession of Satan. And frequently seasons of extraordinary advantage for salvation,when they pass over persons, and they do not improve them, nor receive any good in them, seal their damnation. As such seasons leave them, God for ever leaves them, and gives them up to judicial hardness. Luke 19:41, 42. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

6. Consider, that it is very uncertain whether you will ever see such another time as this. If there should be such another time, it is very uncertain uncertain whether you will live to another time, it is very uncertain whether you will eve whether you will live to see it. Many that are now concerned for their salvation amongst us, will probably be in their graves, and it may be in hell, before that time; and if you should

miss this opportunity, it may be so with you. And what good will that do you, to have the Spirit of God poured out upon earth, in the place where you once lived, while you are tormented in hell? What will it avail you, that others are crying, What shall I do to be saved? while you are shut up for ever in the bottomless pit, and are wailing and gnashing your teeth in everlasting burnings?

Wherefore improve this opportunity, while God is pouring out his Spirit, and you are on earth, and while you dwell in the place where the Spirit of God is thus poured out, and you yourself have the awakening influences of it, that you may never wail and gnash your teeth in hell, but may sing in heaven for ever, with others that are redeemed from amongst men, and redeemed amongst us.

7. If you should see another such time, it will be under far greater disadvantages than now. You will probably then be much older, and will have more hardened your heart; and so will be under less probability of receiving good. Some persons are so hardened in sin, and so left of God, that they can live through such a time as this, and not be much awakened or affected by it; they can stand their ground, and be but little moved. And so it may be with you, by another such time, if there should be another amongst us, and you should live to see it. The case in all probability will be greatly altered with you by that time.

If you should continue Christless and graceless till then, you will be much further from the kingdom of God, and much deeper involved in snares and misery; and the devil will probably have a vastly greater advantage against you, to tempt and confound you.

8. We do not know but that God is now gathering in his elect, before some great and sore judgment. It has been God's manner before he casts off a visible people, or brings some great and destroying judgments upon them, first to gather in his elect, that they may be secure. So it was before the casting off the Jews from being God's people. There was first a very remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and gathering in of the elect, by the preaching of the apostles and evangelists, as we read in the beginning of the Acts: but after this the harvest and its gleanings were over, the rest were blinded, and hardened; the gospel had little success amongst them,

and the nation was given up, and cast off from being God's people, and their city and land was destroyed by the Romans in a terrible manner; and they have been cast off by God now for a great many ages, and still remain a hardened and rejected people. So we read in the beginning of the 7th chapter of the Revelations, that God, when about to bring destroying judgments on the earth, first sealed his servants in the forehead. He set his seal upon the hearts of the elect, gave them the saving influences and indwelling of his Spirit, by which they were sealed to the day of redemption. Revelation 7:1-3. "And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

And this may be the case now, that God is about, in a great measure, to forsake this land, and give up this people, and to bring most awful and overwhelming judgments upon it, and that he is now gathering in his elect, to secure them from the calamity. The state of the nation, and of this land, never looked so threatening of such a thing as at this day. The present aspect of things exceedingly threatens vital religion, and even those truths that are especially the foundation of it, out of this land. If it should be so, how awful will the case be with those that shall be left, and not brought in, while God continues the influences of his Spirit, to gather in those that are to be redeemed from amongst us!

9. If you neglect the present opportunity, and be finally unbelieving, those that are converted in this time of the pouring out of God's Spirit will rise up in judgment against you. Your neighbors, your relations, acquaintance, or companions that are converted, will that day appear against you. They will not only be taken while you are left, mounting up with joy to meet the Lord in the air-at his right hand with glorious saints and angels, while you are at the left with devils-but how they will rise up in judgment against you.

However friendly you have been together, and have taken pleasure in one

another's company, and have often familiarly conversed together, they will then surely appear against you. They will rise up as witnesses, and will declare what a precious opportunity you had, and did not improve; how you continued unbelieving, and rejected the offers of a Saviour, when those offers were made in so extraordinary a manner, and when so many others were prevailed upon to accept of Christ; how you was negligent and slack, and did not know the things that belonged to your peace, in that your day. And not only so, but they shall be your judges, as assessors with the great Judge; and as such will appear against you; they will be with the Judge in passing sentence upon you. I Corinthians 6:2. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Christ will admit them to the honour of judging the world with him: "They shall sit with him in his throne," Revelation 3:21. "They shall sit with Christ in his throne of government, and they shall sit with him in his throne of judgment, and shall be judges with him when you are judged, and as such shall condemn you.

10. And lastly, You do not know that you shall live through the present time of the pouring out of God's Spirit. You may be taken away in the midst of it, or you may be taken away in the beginning of it; as God in his providence is putting you in mind, by the late instance of death in a young person in the town.* God has of late been very awful in his dealings with us, in the repeated deaths of young persons amongst us. This should stir every one up to be in the more haste to press into the kingdom of God, that so you may be safe whenever death comes. This is a blessed season and opportunity; but you do not know how little of it you may have. You may have much less of it than others; may by death be suddenly snatched away from all advantages that are here enjoyed for the good of souls. Therefore make haste, and escape for thy life. One moment's delay is dangerous; for wrath is pursuing, and divine vengeance hanging over every uncovered person.

Let these considerations move every one to be improving this opportunity, that while others receive saving good, and are made heirs of eternal glory, you may not be left behind, in the same miserable doleful circumstances in which you came into the world, a poor captive to sin and Satan, a lost sheep, a perishing, undone creature, sinking down into everlasting perdition; that you may not be one of them spoken of,

Jeremiah 17:6. "That shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes." If you do not improve this opportunity, remember I have told you, you will hereafter lament it; and if you do not lament it in this world, then I will leave it with you to remember it throughout a miserable eternity.

II. I would address myself to such as yet remain unawakened. It is an awful thing that there should be any one person remaining secure amongst us at such a time as this; but yet it is to be feared that there are some of this sort. I would here a little expostulate with such persons.

* Joseph Clark's wife, a young woman lately married, that died suddenly the week before this was delivered.

1. When do you expect that it will be more likely that you should be awakened and wrought upon than now? You are in a Christless condition; and yet without doubt intend to go to heaven; and therefore intend to be converted some time before you die; but this is not to be expected till you are first awakened, and deeply concerned about the welfare of your soul, and brought earnestly to seek God's converting grace. And when do you intend that this shall be? How do you lay things out in your own mind, or what projection have you about this matter? Is it ever so likely that a person will be awakened, as at such a time as this? How do we see many, who before were secure, now roused out of their sleep, and crying, What shall I do to be saved? But you are yet secure! Do you flatter yourself that it will be more likely you should be awakened when it is a dull and dead time? Do you lay matters out thus in your own mind, that though you are senseless when others are generally awakened, that yet you shall be awakened when others are generally senseless? Or do you hope to see another such time of the pouring out of God's Spirit hereafter? And do you think it will be more likely that you should be wrought upon then, than now? And why do you think so? Is it because then you shall be so much older than you are now, and so that your heart will be grown softer and more tender with age? or because you will then have stood out so much longer against the calls of the gospel, and all means of grace? Do you think it more likely that God will give you the needed influences of his Spirit then, than now, because then you will have provoked him so

much more, and your sin and guilt will be so much greater? And do you think it will be any benefit to you, to stand it out through the present season of grace, as proof against the extraordinary means of awakening there are? Do you think that this will be a good preparation for a saving work of the Spirit hereafter?

2. What means do you expect to be awakened by? As to the awakening awful things of the word of God, you have had those set before you times without number, in the most moving manner that the dispensers of the word have been capable of. As to particular solemn warnings, directed to those that are in your circumstances, you have had them frequently, and have them now from time to time. Do you expect to be awakened by awful providences? Those also you have lately had, of the most awakening nature, one after another. Do you expect to be moved by the deaths of others? We have lately had repeated instances of these. There have been deaths of old and young: the year has been remarkable for the deaths of young persons in the bloom of life; and some of them very sudden deaths. Will the conversion of others move you? There is indeed scarce any thing that is found to have so great a tendency to stir persons up as this: and this you have been tried with of late in frequent instances; but are hitherto proof against it. Will a general pouring out of the Spirit, and seeing a conern about salvation amongst all sorts of people, do it? This means you now have, but without effect. Yea, you have all these things together; you have the solemn warnings of God's word, and awful instances of death, and the conversion of others, and see a general concern about salvation: but all together do not move you to any great concern about your own precious, immortal, and miserable soul. Therefore consider by what means it is that you expect ever to be awakened.

You have heard that it is probable some who are now awakened, will never obtain salvation; how dark then does it look upon you that remain stupidly unawakened! Those who are not moved at such a time as this, come to adult age, have reason to fear whether they are not given up to judicial hardness. I do not say they have reason to conclude it, but they have reason to fear it. How dark doth it look upon you, that God comes and knocks at so many persons' doors, and misses yours! that God is

giving the strivings of his Spirit so generally amongst us, while you ar left senseless!

3. Do you expect to obtain salvation without ever seeking it? If you are sensible that there is a necessity of your seeking in order to obtaining, and ever intend to seek, one would think you could not avoid it at such a time as this. Inquire therefore, whether you intend to go to heaven, living all your days a secure, negligent, careless life.-Or,

4. Do you think you can bear the damnation of hell? Do you imagine that you can tolerably endure the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Do you hope that you shall be able to grapple with the vengeance of God Almighty, when he girds himself with strength, and clothes himself with wrath? Do you think to strengthen yourself against God, and to be able to make your part good with him? I Corinthians 10:22. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" Do you flatter yourself that you shall find out ways for your ease and support, and to make it out tolerably well, to bear up your spirit in those everlasting burnings that are prepared for the devil and his angels? Ezekiel 22:14. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"-It is a difficult thing to conceive what such Christless persons think, that are unconcerned at such a time.

III. I would direct myself to them who are grown considerably into years, and are yet in a natural condition.

I would now take occasion earnestly to exhort you to improve this extraordinary opportunity, and press into the kingdom of God. You have lost many advantages that once you had, and now have not the same advantages that others have. The case is very different with you from what it is with many of your neighbours. You, above all, had need to improve such an opportunity. Now is the time for you to bestir yourself, and take the kingdom of heaven!-Consider,

1. Now there seems to be a door opened for old sinners. Now God is dealing forth freely to all sorts: his hand is opened wide, and he does not pass by old ones so much as he used to do. You are not under such advantages as others who are younger; but yet, so wonderfully has God

ordered it, that now you are not destitute of great advantage. Though old in sin, God has put a new and extraordinary advantage in your hands. O! improve this price you have to get wisdom. You that have been long seeking to enter in at the strait gate and yet remain without, now take your opportunity and press in! You that have been long in the wilderness, fighting with various temptations, labouring under discouragements, ready to give up the case, and have been often tempted to despair, now, behold the door that God opens for you! Do not give way to discouragements now; this is not a time for it. Do not spend time in thinking, that you have done what you can already, and that you are not elected, and in giving way to other perplexing, weakening, disheartening temptations. Do not waste away this precious opportunity in such a manner. You have no time to spare for such things as these; God calls you now to something else. Improve this time in seeking and striving for salvation, and not in that which tends to hinder it.-It is no time now for you to stand talking with the devil; but hearken to God, and apply yourself to that which he does now so loudly call you to.

Some of you have often lamented the loss of past opportunties, particularly, the loss of the time of youth, and have been wishing that you had so good an opportunity again; and have been ready to say, "O! if I was young again, how would I improve such an advantage!" That opportunity which you have had in time past is irrecoverable; you can never have it again; but God can give you other advantages of another sort, that are very great, and he is so doing at this day. He is now putting a new opportunity into your hands; though not of the same kind with that which you once had, and have lost, yet in some respects as great of another kind. If you lament your folly in neglecting and losing past opportunties, then do not be guilty of the folly of neglecting the opportunity which God now gives you. This opportunity you could not have purchased, if you would have given all that you had in the world for it. But God is putting it into your hands himself, of his own free and sovereign mercy, without your purchasing it. Therefore when you have it, do not neglect it.

2. It is a great deal more likely with respect to such persons than others, that this is their last time. There will be a last time of special offer of salvation to impenitent sinners-"God's Spirit shall not always strive with

man," Genesis 6:3. God sometimes continues long knocking at the doors of wicked men's hearts; but there are the last knocks, and the last calls that ever they shall have. And sometimes God's last calls are the loudest; and then if sinners do not hearken, he finally leaves them. How long has God been knocking at many of your doors that are old in sin! It is a great deal more likely that these are his last knocks. You have resisted God's Spirit in times past, and have hardened your heart once and again; but God will not be thus dealt with always. There is danger, that if now, after so long a time, you will not hearken, he will utterly desert you, and leave you to walk in your own counsels.

It seems by God's providence, as though God had yet an elect number amongst old sinners in this place, that perhaps he is now about to bring in. It looks as though there were some that long lived under Mr. Stoddard's ministry, that God has not utterly cast off, though they stood it out under such great means as they then enjoyed. It is to be hoped that God will now bring in a remnant from among them. But it is more likely that God is now about finishing with them, one way or other, for their having been so long the subjects of such extraordinary means. You have seen former times of the pouring out of God's Spirit upon the town, when others were taken and you left, others were called out of darkness into marvelous light, and were brought into a glorious and happy state, and you saw not good when good came. How dark will your circumstances appear, if you shall also stand it out through this opportunity, and still be left behind! Take heed that you be not of those spoken of, Hebrews 6:7, 8. that are like the "earth that has rain coming oft upon it, and only bears briers and thorns." As we see there are some pieces of ground, the more showers of rain fall upon them, the more fruitful seasons there are, the more do the briers, and other useless and hurtful plants, that are rooted in them, grow and flourish. Of such ground the apostle says, "It is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." The way that the husbandman takes with such ground, is, to set fire to it, to burn up the growth of it.-If you miss this opportunity, there is danger that you will be utterly rejected, and that your end will be to be burned. And if this is to be, it is to be feared, that you are not far from, but nigh unto, cursing.

Those of you that are already grown old in sin, and are now under awakenings, when you feel your convictions begin to go off, if ever that should be, then remember what you have now been told; it may well then strike you to the heart!

IV. I would direct the advice to those that are young, and now under their first special convictions. I would earnestly urge such to improve this opportunity, and press into the kingdom of God.-Consider two things,

1. You have all manner of advantages now centering upon you. It is a time of great advantage for all; but your advantages are above others. There is no other sort of persons that have now so great and happy an opportunity as you have.-You have the great advantage that is common to all who live in this place, viz. That now it is a time of the extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit of God. And have you not that great advantage, the awakening influences of the Spirit of God on you in particular? and besides, you have this peculiar advantage, that you are now in your youth. And added to this, you have another unspeakable advantage, that you now are under your first convictions. Happy is he that never has hardened his heart, and blocked up his own way to heaven by backsliding, and has now the awakening influences of God's Spirit, if God does but enable him thoroughly to improve them! Such above all in the world bid fair for the kingdom of God. God is wont on such, above any kind of persons, as it were easily and readily to bestow the saving grace and comforts of his Spirit. Instances of speedy and sudden conversion are most commonly found among such. Happy are they that have the Spirit of God with them, and never have quenched it, if they did but know the price they have in their hands!

If you have a sense of your necessity of salvation, and the great worth and value of it, you will be willing to take the surest way to it, or that which has the greatest probability of success; and that certainly is, thoroughly to improve your first convictions. If you so go, it is not likely that you will fail; there is the greatest probability that you will succeed.-What is it not worth, to have such an advantage in one's hands for obtaining eternal life? The present season of the pouring out of God's Spirit, is the first that many of you who are now under awakenings have ever seen, since you

came to years of understanding. On which account, it is the greatest opportunity that ever you had, and probably by far the greatest that ever you will have. There are many here present who wish they had such an opportunity, but they never can obtain it; they cannot buy it for money; but you have it in your possession, and can improve it if you will. But yet,

2. There is on some accounts greater danger that such as are in your circumstances will fail of thoroughly improving their convictions, with respect to stedfastness and perseverance, than others. Those that are young are more unstable than elder persons. They who never had convictions before, have less experience of the difficulty of the work they have engaged in; they are more ready to think that they shall obtain salvation easily, and are more easily discouraged by disappointments; and young persons have less reason and consideration to fortify them against temptations to backsliding. You should therefore labour now the more to guard against such temptations. By all means make but one work of seeking salvation! Make thorough work of it the first time! There are vast disadvantages that they bring themselves under, who have several turns of seeking with great intermissions. By such a course, persons exceedingly wound their own souls, and entangle themselves in many snares. Who are those that commonly meet with so many difficulties, and are so long labouring in darkness and perplexity, but those who have had several turns at seeking salvation; who have one while had convictions, and then have quenched them, and then have set about the work again, and have backslidden again, and have gone on after that manner? The children of Israel would not have been forty years in the wilderness, if they had held their courage, and had gone on as they set out; but they were of an unstable mind, and were for going back again into Egypt.- Otherwise, if they had gone right forward without discouragement, as God would have led them, they would have soon entered and taken possession of Canaan. They had got to the very borders of it when they turned back, but were thirty-eight years after that, before they got through the wilderness. Therefore, as you regard the interest of your soul, do not run yourself into a like difficulty, by unsteadiness, intermission, and backsliding; but press right forward, from henceforth, and make but one work of seeking, converting, and pardoning grace, however great, and difficult, and long a work that may be.

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How to Know if You are a Real Christian

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." [James 2:19]

How do you know if you belong to God? We see in these words what some people depend on as an evidence of their acceptance with God. Some people think that they are all right before God if they are not as bad as some evil person. Other people point to their family history or church membership to show that God approves of them. There is an evangelism programme in common use that asks people certain questions. One of the questions is, "Suppose you were to die today. Why should God let you into his heaven?" A very common response is, "I believe in God." Apparently the apostle James knew people who said the same thing: I know I am in God's favor, because I know these religious doctrines.

Of course James admits that this knowledge is good. Not only is it good, but it is also necessary. Nobody can be a Christian who doesn't believe in God; and more than that, the One True God. This is particularly true for those who had the great advantage of actually knowing the apostle, someone who could tell them of his first-hand experience with Jesus, the Son of God. Imagine the great sin of a person, who knew James, and then refused to believe in God! Certainly this would make their damnation greater. Of course, all Christians know that this belief in the One God is only the start of good things because "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11:6.)

However, James is clear that although this belief a good thing, it is definitely not proof that a person is saved. What he means is this: "You say you are a Christian and you are in God's favor. You think God will let

you into heaven, and the proof of it is, you believe in God. But that is no evidence at all, because the demons also believe, and they are sure to be punished in hell."

The demons believe in God, you can be sure of that! They not only believe that He exists, but they believe that God is a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God of truth, who has promised judgments, and who will carry out his vengeance upon them. This is the reason the demons "shudder" or tremble--they know God more clearly than most human beings do, and they are afraid. Nevertheless, nothing in the mind of man, that devils may experience as well, is any sure sign of God's grace in our hearts.

This reasoning may be easily turned around. Suppose demons could have, or find within themselves, something of God's saving grace-proof they would go to heaven. This would prove James wrong. But how absurd! The Bible makes it clear that demons have no hope of salvation, and their believing in God does not take away their future punishment. Therefore believing in God is not proof of salvation for demons, and it is safe to say, not for people, either.

Demons Have a Knowledge of God.

This is seen even more clearly when we think about what demons are like. They are unholy: anything that they experience, cannot be a holy experience. The devil is perfectly wicked. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." (1 John 3:8) Therefore the demons are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, and so on. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual
forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12)

So it is plain that anything in the minds of demons cannot be holy, or lead

to true holiness by itself. The demons clearly know many things about God and religion, but they do not have a holy knowledge. The things they know in their minds may make impressions in their hearts- indeed we do see that the demons have very strong feelings about God; so strong, in fact, that they "shudder." But they are not holy feelings because they have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. If this is true of the experience of demons, it is also true of the experience of men.

Notice this, that it does not matter how genuine, sincere, and powerful these thoughts and feelings are. Demons, being spiritual creatures, know God in a way that men on earth cannot. Their knowledge of God's existence is more concrete than any man's knowledge could be. Because they are locked in battle with the forces of good, they have a sincerity of knowledge as well. On one occasion Jesus cast out some demons. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Mat 8:29) What could possibly be a more clear-cut experience than this? However, while their thoughts and feelings are genuine and powerful, they are not holy.

Also we can see that the holy objects of their thoughts doesn't make their thoughts and feelings holy. The demons know God exists! Matthew 8:29 shows they know more about Jesus than many people do! They are thoroughly that Jesus will judge them some day, because He is holy. But it is clear that genuine, sincere, and powerful thoughts and feelings about holy, spiritual things, is no proof of God's grace in the heart. Demons have these things, and look forward to eternal punishment in hell. If men have no more than what the demons have, they will suffer in the same way.

Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation.

We may make several conclusions based on these truths. First, that no matter how much people may know about God and the Bible, it is no sure sign of salvation. The devil before his fall, was one of the bright and morning stars, a flame of fire, one excelling in strength and wisdom. (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:12-19) Apparently, as one of the chief angels, Satan knew much about God. Now that he is fallen, his sin has not destroyed his

memories from before. Sin does destroy the spiritual nature, but not the natural abilities, such as memory. That the fallen angels do have many natural abilities may be seen from many Bible verses, for example Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In the same way, the Bible says that Satan is "more crafty" than other created beings. (Gen 3:1, also 2 Cor. 11:3, Acts 13:10)

Therefore we can see that the Devil has always had great mental ability and is able to know much about God, the visible and invisible world, and many other things. Since his job in the beginning was to be a chief angel before God, it is only natural that understanding these things has always been of first importance to him, and that all his activities have to do with these areas of thoughts, feelings, and knowledge.

Because it was his original employment to be one of the angels before the very face of God, and sin does not destroy the memory, it is clear that Satan knows more about God than just about any other created being. After the fall, we can see from his activities as a tempter, etc., (Matt 4:3) that he has been spending his time increasing his knowledge and its practical applications. That his knowledge is great can be seen in how tricky he is when tempting people. The craftiness of his lies shows how clever he is. Surely he could not manage his deceit so well without an actual and true knowledge of the facts.

This knowledge of God and his works is from the very beginning. Satan was there from the Creation, as Job 38:47 shows: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. . .while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" So he must know much about the way God created the world, and how He governs all the events in the universe. Furthermore, Satan has seen how God has worked his plan of redemption in the world; and not as an innocent bystander, but as an active enemy of God's grace. He saw God work in the lives of Adam and Eve, in
Noah, Abraham, and David. He must have taken a special interest in the life of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, the Word of God incarnate. How

closely did he watch Christ? How carefully did he observe his miracles and listen to His words? This is because Satan has set himself against Christ's work, and it is to his torment and anguish that Satan has watched Christ's work unfold successfully.

Satan, then, knows much about God and God's work. He knows heaven first-hand. He knows hell also, with personal knowledge as its first resident, and has experienced its torments for all these thousands of years. He must have a great knowledge of the Bible: at the least, we can see he knew enough to try tempting our Saviour. Furthermore, he has had years of studying of the hearts of men, his battlefield where he fights against our Redeemer. What labours, exertions, and cares the Devil has used over the centuries as he has deceived men. Only a being with his knowledge and experience of God's
working, and the human heart, could so imitate true religion and transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor 11:14)

Therefore we can see that there is no amount of knowledge of God and religion that could prove a person has been saved from their sin. A man may talk about the Bible, God, and the Trinity. He may be able to preach a sermon about Jesus Christ and everything He has done. Imagine, somebody might be able to speak about the way of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners, perhaps even enough to show others how to become Christians. All these things might build up the church and enlighten the world, yet it is not a sure proof of the saving grace of God in a person's heart.

It also may be seen that for people to merely agree with the Bible is no sure sign of salvation. James 2:19 shows that the demons really, truly, believe the truth. Just as they believe there is one God, they agree with all the truth of the Bible. The devil is not a heretic: all the articles of his faith are firmly established in the truth.

It must be understood, that when the Bible talks about believing that Jesus is the Son of God, as a proof of God's grace in the heart, the Bible means not a mere agreement with the truth, but another kind of believing. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

(1 John 5:1) This other kind of believing is called "the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness." (Titus 1:1) There is a spiritual holding to the truth, which will be explained later on.

Religious experiences are no proof of salvation.

Some people have strong religious experiences, and think of them as proof of God's working in their hearts. Often these experiences give people a sense of the importance of the spiritual world, and the reality of divine things. However, these, too, are no sure proof of salvation. Demons and damned human beings have many spiritual experiences which have a great effect on their heart attitudes. They live in the spiritual world and see first-hand what it is like. Their sufferings show them the worth of salvation and the worth of a human soul in the most powerful way imaginable. The parable in Luke chapter 16 teaches this clearly, as the suffering man asks that Lazarus might be sent to tell his brothers to avoid this place of torment. No doubt people in hell now have a distinct idea of the vastness of eternity, and of the shortness of life. They are completely convinced that all the things of this life are unimportant when compared to the experiences of the eternal world.

People now in hell have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the wonderful opportunities people have, who have the privilege of hearing the Gospel. They are completely aware of the foolishness of their sin, of neglecting opportunities, and ignoring the warnings of God. When sinners find out by personal experience the final result of their sin there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 13:42) So even the most powerful religious experiences are not a sure sign of God's grace in the heart.

Demons and damned people also have a strong sense of God's majesty and power. God's power is most clearly displayed in his execution of divine vengeance upon his enemies. "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Rom 9:22) Shuddering, the devils await their final punishment, under the strongest sense of God's majesty. They feel it now, of course, but in the future it will show to the greatest degree, when the Lord Jesus "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with

his powerful angels." (2 Thess 2:7) On that day, they will desire to be run away, to be hidden from the presence of God. "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of
the earth will mourn because of him." (Rev 1:7) So everyone will see him in the glory of His Father. But, obviously, not all who see him will be saved.

Objection #1- People are different from demons.

Now it is possible that some people might object to all this, saying that ungodly men in this world are quite different from demons. They are under different circumstances and are different kind of beings. An objector might say, "Those things that are visible and present to demons are invisible and future to men. Besides, people have the disadvantage of having bodies, which restrain the soul, and keep people from seeing these spiritual things first-hand. Therefore, even if demons do have a great knowledge and personal experience of the things of God, and have no grace, the conclusion does not apply to me." Or, put another way: if people have these things in this life, it may very well be a sure sign of God's grace in their hearts.

In reply, it is agreed that no man in this life has ever had the degree of these things as the demons have them. No person has ever shuddered, with the same amount of fear that the demons shudder with. No man, in this life, can ever have the same kind of knowledge that the Devil has. It is clear that demons and damned men understand the vastness of eternity, and the importance of the other world, more than any living person, and so they crave salvation all the more.

But we can see that men in this world can have experiences of the same kind as those of demons and damned people. They have the same mental outlook, the same opinions and emotions, and the same kind of impressions on the mind and heart. Notice, that for the apostle James it is a convincing argument. He claims that if people think believing in one God is proof of God's grace, it is not proof, because demons believe the same. James is not referring to the act of believing only, but also to the

emotions and actions that go along with their belief. Shuddering is an example of emotions from the heart. This shows that if people have the same kind of mental outlook, and respond from the heart in the same way, it is no sure sign of grace.

The Bible does not state how much people in this world may see God's glory, and not have God's grace in their hearts. We are not told exactly to what degree God reveals himself to certain people, and how much they will respond in their hearts. It is very tempting to say that if a person has a certain amount of religious experience, or a certain amount of truth, they must be saved. Perhaps it is even possible for some unsaved people to have greater experiences than some of those who have grace in their hearts! So it is wrong to look at experience or knowledge in terms of amount. Men who have a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts have experiences and knowledge of a different kind.

Objection #2- People can have religious feelings that demons cannot.

At this point, someone might answer these thoughts by saying, "I agree with you. I see that believing in God, seeing His majesty and holiness, and knowing that Jesus died for sinners is not proof of grace in my heart. I agree that demons can know these things as well. But I have some things they don't have. I have joy, peace, and love. Demons can't have them, so that must show that I am saved."

Yes, it is true that you have something more than a demon can have, but it is nothing better than a demon could have. A person's experience of love, joy, etc., may not be because they have any cause in them different from a demon, but just different circumstances. The causes, or origins, of their feelings are the same. This is why these experiences are no better than those of demons. To explain further:

All the things that were discussed before about demons and damned people, arise from two main causes, natural understanding and self-love. When they think about themselves, these two things are what determine their feelings and response. Natural understanding shows them that God

is holy, while they are wicked. God is infinite, but they are limited. God is powerful, and they are weak. Self-love gives them a sense of the importance of religion, the eternal world, and a longing after salvation. When these two causes work together, demons and damned men become aware of the awesome majesty of
God, whom they know will be their Judge. They know that God's judgment will be perfect and their punishment will be forever. Therefore, these two causes together with their senses will bring about their anguish on that judgment day, when they see the outward glory of Christ and His saints.

The reason many people feel joy, peace, and love today, while demons do not, may be more due to their circumstances, rather than any difference in their hearts. The causes in their hearts are the same. For example, the Holy Spirit is now at work in the world keeping all of mankind from being as wicked as they could be (2 Thess 2:17). This is in contrast to demons, who are just as wicked as they can be all the time. Furthermore, God in his mercy gives gifts to all people, such as the rain for crops (Matt 5:45), heat from the sun, etc. Not only that, but often people receive many things in life to bring them happiness, such as personal relationships, pleasures, music, good health, and so on. Most important of all, many people have heard news of hope: God has sent a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. In these circumstances, the natural understanding of people can cause them to feel things that demons never can.

Self-love is a powerful force in the hearts of men, strong enough without grace to cause people to love those who love them, "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." (Luke 6:32) It is a natural thing for a person who sees God being merciful, and who knows that they are not as bad as they could be, to therefore be sure of God's love for them. If your love for God comes only from your feelings that God loves you, or because you have heard that Christ died for you, or something similar, the source of your love to God is only self-love. This reigns in the hearts of demons as well.

Imagine the situation of the demons. They know they are unrestrained in

their wickedness. They know God is their enemy and always will be. Although they are without any hope, still they are active and fighting. Just think, what if they had some of the hope that people have? What if demons, with their knowledge of God, had their wickedness restrained? Imagine if a demon, after all his fears about God's judgment, was suddenly led to imagine that God might be his Friend? That God might forgive him and let him, sin and all, into heaven? Oh the joy, the wonder, the gratitude we would see! Would not this demon be a great lover of God, since, after all everybody loves people who help them? What else could cause feelings so powerful and sincere? Is it any wonder, that so many people are deceived this way? Especially since people have the demons to promote this delusion. They have been promoting it now for many centuries, and alas they are very good at it.

True Spiritual experiences have a different source.

Now we come to the question, if all these various experiences and feelings come from nothing more than demons are capable of, what are the kinds of experiences that are truly spiritual and holy? What do I have to find in my own heart, as a sure sign of God's grace there? What are the differences that show them to be from the Holy Spirit?

This is the answer: those feelings and experiences which are good signs of God's grace in the heart differ from the experience of demons in their source and in their results.

Their source is the sense of the overwhelming holy beauty and loveliness of the things of God. When a person grasps in his mind, or better yet, when he feels his own heart held captive by the attractiveness of the Divine, this is an unmistakable sign of God's working.

The demons and damned in hell do not now, and never will experience even the tiniest bit of this. Before their fall, the demons did have this sense of God. But in their fall, they lost it, the only thing they could lose of their knowledge of God. We have seen how the demons have very clear ideas about how powerful God is, his justice, holiness, and so on. They know a lot of facts about God. But now they haven't a clue about what

God is like. They cannot know what God is like any more than a blind man can know about colors! Demons can have a strong sense God's awesome majesty, but they don't see his loveliness. They have observed His work among the human race for these thousands of years, indeed with the closest attention; but they never see a glimmer of His beauty. No matter how much they know about God (and we have seen that they know very much indeed) the knowledge they have will never bring them to this higher, spiritual knowing what God is like. On the contrary, the more they know about God, the more they hate Him. The beauty of God consists primarily in this holiness, or moral excellence, and this is what they hate the most. It is because God is holy that the demons hate Him. One could suppose that if God were to be less holy, the demons would hate Him less. No doubt demons would hate any holy Being, no matter what He was like otherwise. But surely they hate this Being all the more, for being infinitely holy, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful!

Wicked people, including those alive today, will on the day of judgment see all there is to see of Jesus Christ, except His beauty and loveliness. There is not one thing about Christ that we can think of, that will not be set before them in the strongest light on that brilliant day. The wicked will see Jesus "coming in clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26) They will see his outward glory, which is far, far greater than we can possibly imagine now. You know the wicked will be thoroughly convinced of all who Christ is. They will be convinced about His omniscience, as they see all their sins replayed and evaluated. They will know first-hand Christ's justice, as their sentences are announced. His authority will be made utterly convincing when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. (Phil 2:10,11) The divine majesty will be impressed upon them in quite an effective way, as the wicked are poured into hell itself, and enter into their final state of suffering and death (Rev 20:14,15) When that happens, all their knowledge of God, as true and as powerful as it may be, will be worth nothing, and less than nothing, because they will not see Christ's beauty.

Therefore, it is this seeing the loveliness of Christ that makes the difference between the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and the

experiences of demons. This sight or sense is what makes true Christian experience different from everything else. The faith of God's elect people is based on this. When a person sees the excellence of the gospel, he senses the beauty and loveliness of the divine scheme of salvation. His mind is convinced that it is of God, and he believes it with all his heart. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 4:34, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The
god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That is to say, as was explained before, unbelievers can see that there is a gospel, and understand the facts about it, but they do not see its light. The light of the gospel is the glory of Christ, his holiness and beauty. Right after this we read, 2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Clearly, it is this divine light, shining into our hearts, that enables us to see the beauty of the gospel and have a saving belief in Christ. This supernatural light shows us the superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus, and convinces us of His sufficiency as our
Saviour. Only such a glorious, majestic Saviour can be our Mediator, standing between guilty, hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves, and an infinitely holy God. This supernatural light gives us a sense of Christ that convinces us in a way nothing else ever could.

A true spiritual experience transforms the heart.

When a most wicked sinner is caused to see Christ's divine loveliness, he no longer speculates why God should be interested in him, to save him. Before, he could not understand how the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sins. But now he can see the preciousness of Christ's blood, and how it is worthy to be accepted as the ransom for the worst of sins. Now the soul can recognize that he is accepted by God, not because of who he is, but because of the value God puts on the blood, obedience, and intercession of Christ. Seeing this value and worth gives the poor guilty soul rest which cannot be found in any sermon or booklet.

When a person comes to see the proper foundation of faith and trust with

his own eyes, this is saving faith. "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." (John 6:40) "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." (John 17:6-8) It is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that captivates the wills and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the outward greatness of God in His glory may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure. This will be seen on the day of judgment, when the wicked will be brought before God. They will be overwhelmed, yes, but the hostility of the heart will remain in full strength and the opposition of the will continue. But on the other hand, a single ray of the moral and spiritual glory of God and of the supreme loveliness of Christ shone into the heart overcomes all hostility. The soul is inclined to love God as if by an omnipotent power, so that now not only the understanding, but the whole being receives and embraces the loving Saviour.

This sense of the beauty of Christ is the beginning of true saving faith in the life of a true convert. This is quite different from any vague feeling that Christ loves him or died for him. These sort of fuzzy feelings can cause a sort of love and joy, because the person feels a gratitude for escaping the punishment of their sin. In actual fact, these feelings are based on self-love, and not on a love for Christ at all. It is a sad thing that so many people are deluded by this false faith. On the other hand, a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ causes in the heart a supreme genuine love for God. This is because the divine light shows the excellent loveliness of God's nature. A love based on this is far, far above anything coming from self-love, which demons can have as well as men. The true love of God which comes from this sight of His beauty causes a spiritual and holy joy in the soul; a joy in God, and exulting in Him. There is no rejoicing in ourselves, but rather in God alone.

Genuine spiritual experiences have different results.

The sight of the beauty of divine things will cause true desires after the

things of God. These desires are different from the longings of demons, which happen because the demons know their doom awaits them, and they wish it could somehow be otherwise. The desires that come from this sight of Christ's beauty are natural free desires, like a baby desiring milk. Because these desires are so different from their counterfeits, they help to distinguish genuine experiences of God's grace from the false.

False spiritual experiences have a tendency to cause pride, which is the devil's special sin. "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the inevitable result of false spiritual experiences, even though they are often covered with a disguise of great humility. False experience is enamored with self and grows on self. It lives by showing itself in one way or another. A person can have great love for God, and be proud of the greatness of his love. He can be very humble, and very proud indeed of his humility. But the emotions and experiences that come from God's grace are exactly opposite. God's true working in the heart causes humility. They do not cause any kind of showiness or self-exaltation. That sense of the awesome, holy, glorious beauty of Christ kills pride and humbles the soul. The light of God's loveliness, and that alone, shows the soul its own ugliness. When a person really grasps this, he inevitably begins a process of making God bigger and bigger, and himself smaller and smaller.

Another result of God's grace working in the heart is that the person will hate every evil and respond to God with a holy heart and life. False experiences may cause a certain amount of zeal, and even a great deal of what is commonly called religion. However it is not a zeal for good works. Their religion is not a service of God, but rather a service of self. This is how the apostle James puts it himself in this very context, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless ?" (James 2:1920) In other words, deeds, or good works, are evidence of a genuine experience of God's grace in the heart. "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:34) When the heart has been ravished by the beauty of

Christ, how else can it respond?

The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!

How excellent is that inner goodness and true religion that comes from this sight of the beauty of Christ! Here you have the most wonderful experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Here you have the best experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Even though we are mere creatures, it is a sort of participation in God's own beauty. "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." (2 Pet 1:4) "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (Heb 12:10) Because of the power of this divine working, there is a mutual indwelling of God and His people. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16) This special relationship has to make the person involved as happy and as blessed as any creature in existence. This is a special gift of God, which he gives only to his special favorites. Gold, silver, diamonds, and earthly kingdoms are given by God to people who the Bible calls dogs and pigs. But this great gift of beholding Christ's beauty, is the special blessing of God to His dearest children. Flesh and blood cannot give this gift: only God can bestow it. This was the special gift which Christ died to obtain for his elect. It is the highest token of his everlasting love, the best fruit of his labours and the most precious purchase of his blood.

By this gift, more than anything else, the saints shine as lights in the world. This gift, more than anything else, is their comfort. It is impossible that the soul who possesses this gift should ever perish. This is the gift of eternal life. It is eternal life begun: those who have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory. It comes from heaven, it has a heavenly quality, and it will take its bearer to heaven. Those who have this gift may wander in the wilderness or be tossed by waves on the ocean, but they will arrive in heaven at last. There the heavenly spark will be made perfect and increased. In heaven the souls of the saints will be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

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The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

"God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden." [Romans 9:18]

THE Apostle Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, expresses his great concern and sorrow of heart for the people of Israel, who were rejected by God. This leads him to observe the difference, which God made by election, between some of the Jews and others, and between the majority of the Jews and the Christian Gentiles. In speaking of this he enters into the most detailed discussion found anywhere in the whole Bible concerning the sovereignty of God in electing some to eternal life, and rejecting others. He quotes several passages from the Old Testament, confirming and illustrating this doctrine of Election:

1. In the Book of Romans (9:9), Paul reminds us of what God said to Abraham, showing His election of Isaac before Ishmael, saying,-"At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

2. He shows in verse twelve, what God had said to Rebecca, showing His election of Jacob over Esau; "The older will serve the younger."

3. In the thirteenth verse, he refers to a passage from Malachi, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

4. In the fifteenth verse, to what God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

5. Finally, in the seventeenth verse, to what God said to Pharaoh, "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

From what the apostle says in the text, he seems to have a special regard

for the last two cited passages: to what God said to Moses in the fifteenth verse, and to what He said to Pharaoh in the seventeenth verse. God said to Moses, ***"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy."*** The apostle refers to this in the first part of our text. And we also know that it often said about Pharaoh, that "God hardened his heart." And Paul seems to have focused on this fact in the latter part of the text; "***and He hardens whom He wants to harden."*** Now, from all of this we can observe two basic facts:

1. God's deals differently with men-He has mercy on some, and He hardens others.

When God is spoken of as hardening the hearts of some men, it is not to be understood that God was, in any way, the agent or direct cause of the hardening any man's heart. There is no positive act by God in the hardening process. To suppose any such thing would be to make God the immediate author of sin.

God is said to harden men in two ways:

A. First, by withholding the powerful influences of His Spirit, without which their hearts will remain hardened, and grow harder and harder-in this sense God hardens them, as He leaves them in their hardness.

B. Secondly, God hardens men, by providentially ordering things which, by the continued sin of man, becomes the reason for their hardening. Thus God sends His word and commands to men and women which, they then ignore, thereby, confirming their hardening. So the apostle Paul said, that the gospel message he preached was to some people "the smell of death."

So God is represented as sending Isaiah to the people, to "Make the heart of the people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." [Isaiah 6:10] Isaiah's preaching was, in itself, a message imploring these people to turn from their ways and follow God and His word. But their rejection of God's message caused it to be it an opportunity to further harden their hearts.

God is said to harden men, that He put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets. (2 Chronicles. 18:22). That is, He “allowed” a lying spirit to enter into them. And thus He is said to have told Shimei, a man from the same clan as Saul, to curse David. (2 Samuel 16:10). God did not directly command him to curse David; for it would be contrary to God's commands, for God has expressly said in His Word, “Do not . . . curse the ruler of your people.” [Exodus 22:28] But God “allowed” the evil to work in the heart of Shimei, and then sovereignly brought about the opportunity of stirring it up, as a manifestation of his displeasure against David.

2. The second fact that can be seen in our text is the basic truth that when God deals with mankind, He does so according to His sovereign will and pleasure: “God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.”

This implies that God never shows mercy or denies it against His will, and that He is always willing to do it when He does it. A willing subject or servant, when he obeys his lord's commands, may never do any thing against his will, and yet it cannot be said that the servant does what he wills in the sense of the text, that is, according to his own will and pleasure. But in the case of God, it is His mere will and sovereign pleasure, which supremely orders the affairs of mankind. It is the divine will without any restraint, or constraint, or obligation.

The basic doctrine of our text is, that God exercises His sovereignty in the eternal salvation of men.

He is not only sovereign, but He has a sovereign right to do what He wants in the salvation of men. Nobody can charge Him with going beyond His right; He exercises the right which He has. This morning I propose to show four things,

I. What is God's sovereignty.
II. What God's sovereignty in the salvation of men implies?
III. That God actually does, in fact, exercise His sovereignty in

the salvation of men.
IV. The reasons for this exercise of sovereignty.

I. What is God's sovereignty?

The sovereignty of God is His absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to His own pleasure. Now let us focus on this concept of God's "pleasure"

The will of God is called His good pleasure,

1. **The will of God is called His good pleasure, in opposition to any constraint.**

Men may do things voluntarily, and yet there may be a degree of constraint. A man may be said to do something voluntarily, that is, he does it by himself; and, all things considered, he may choose to do it; yet he may do it out of fear, and the very thing in itself is irritating to him, and truly against his own desires. When men do these things, it cannot be said that they did them according to their good pleasure.

2. **The will of God is called His good pleasure, in opposition to its being under the will of another.**

A servant may carry out his master's commands, and may do it willingly, and cheerfully, and may delight to do his master's will; yet when he does it, he does not do it of his own good pleasure. The saints freely do the will of God. They choose to do it; it is what satisfies their soul. Yet they do not do it of their own good pleasure and arbitrary will; because their will is under the direction of a superior will.

3. **The will of God is called His good pleasure, in opposition to any personal obligation.**

A man may freely do something which he is obliged to do; but it cannot be said that he acted from his own sheer will and pleasure. He who acts according to his own good pleasure, is at full liberty; but he who is under any personal obligation, is not at liberty, but is bound.

Now the sovereignty of God infers, that God has a right to dispose of all His creatures according to His good pleasure. And His right is absolute and independent. Men may have a right to dispose of some things according to their pleasure. But their right is not absolute and unlimited. Men may be said to have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please. But their right is not absolute; is has limits and bounds. They have a right to dispose of their own goods as they please, provided they do not do it contrary to the law of the state to which they are subject to, or contrary to the law of God. Men's right to dispose of their things as they will, is not absolute, because it is not independent. They do not have an independent right to what they want, but in some things depend on the community to which they belong, for the rights they may have; and in everything they depend on God. They receive all the rights they have to do anything from God. But the sovereignty of God means that God has an absolute, and unlimited, and independent right of disposing of his creatures as He pleases.

II. What does God's sovereignty in the salvation of men imply?

In answer to this question, I note, that it implies, that God can either bestow salvation on any man or woman, or refuse it, without any distortion to the glory of any of His attributes, except in the cases where He has been pleased to declare, that He will or will not bestow it-then He must be faithful to His word, He is now bound by His own promise.

As it stands today, it cannot be absolutely stated, that God can, without any distortion to the honor of His attributes, bestow salvation on any man or woman, or refuse it; because, concerning some, God has been pleased to declare either that He will or that He will not bestow salvation on them; and thus He is now bound by His own promise.

Now concerning those that God has been pleased to declare, that He will “never” bestow salvation on them; that is, the non-elect, those who have been left in their sins, and especially in the sin of unbelief in Christ-the sin against the Holy Spirit. In their case, God is obligated; He cannot bestow salvation on them, without violating His declared truth, since He has declared that He will not save any who have sinned against the Holy

Spirit.

God exercised His sovereignty in making these declarations. God was not obligated to promise that He would save all who believe in Christ; nor was He obligated to declare, that He who committed the sin against the Holy Spirit would never be forgiven. But it pleased Him to declare these things. And if God had not been pleased to obligate Himself in these cases, He could have still either bestowed salvation, or refused it, without dishonor to any of His attributes.

If there would have been any dishonor, to any of God's attributes by bestowing or refusing to give salvation, then God would not in that matter act as absolutely sovereign. Because it then ceases to be a merely arbitrary thing. It ceases to be a matter of absolute liberty, and has become a matter of necessity or obligation. For God cannot do any thing that would dishonor any of His attributes, or be contrary to what is in itself excellent and glorious. Therefore,

1. God can, without discredit to the glory of any of His attributes, bestow salvation on any man, woman, or child, except on those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit.

This was the case when man fell, and before God revealed His eternal purpose and plan for redeeming men by Jesus Christ. It was probably looked upon by the angels as a thing utterly inconsistent with God's attributes to save anyone from the human race. It was utterly inconsistent with the honor of the divine attributes to save any of fallen mankind, as they were lost in their sins. It could not have been done had not God contrived a way consistent with the honor of His holiness, majesty, justice, and truth. But since God, in the gospel, has revealed that nothing is too hard for Him to do, nothing beyond the reach of His power, and wisdom, and sufficiency; and since Christ has provided the work of redemption, and fulfilled the law by obeying it completely, therefore there is no one, of all mankind, whom He can save that would ever cause any prejudice to any of His attributes, except those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit.

And even those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit could have been saved by Christ without going contrary to any of his attributes, had He not been pleased to declare that He would not. It was not because He could not have saved them consistent with His justice, and consistent with His law, or because His attribute of mercy was not great enough, or the blood of Christ was not sufficient to cleanse from that sin. But it has pleased God, for wise reasons, to declare that that sin shall never be forgiven in this world, or in the world to come. And so now it is contrary to God's truth to save such persons. But otherwise there is no sinner, no matter how great his sin has been, that cannot be saved by God, and without any prejudice to any of His attributes; if he has been a murderer, adulterer, or perjurer, or idolater, or blasphemer, God can save him if He pleases to, with no dishonor to His glory.

Even though persons have sinned for a long time, have been obstinate, have committed monstrous sins a thousand times, even till they have grown old in sin; if they have sinned while under the clear preaching of the Word; if they have been backsliders, and have sinned after receiving numerous solemn warnings and strivings of the Spirit, and after receiving numerous mercies of God's common providence: though the danger of such is much greater than of other sinners, yet God can save them if He pleases, for the sake of Christ, without any prejudice to any of his attributes. He may have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He may have mercy on the greatest of sinners, if He pleases, and the glory of none of His attributes will dishonored in the least. Such is the sufficiency of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, that none of the divine attributes stand in the way of the salvation of any of them. Thus the glory of any attribute did not at all suffer by Christ's saving some of those that crucified Him.

1. God may save anyone He pleases, without prejudice to the honor of His holiness.

God is infinitely holy. The heavens are not pure in His sight. His eyes are too pure to look on evil; and cannot tolerate wrong. And if God should in any way tolerate sin, and should not give proper evidence of His hatred of it, and displeasure at it, it would be a distortion of the honor of His holiness. But God can save the greatest sinner without giving the least

approval of sin. If he saves one, who for a long time has resisted the calls of the gospel; if he saves one who, fighting against the truth, has been a pirate or blasphemer, He may do it without giving any support to their wickedness; because His abhorrence of it and displeasure against it have already been sufficiently manifested in the sufferings of Christ. It was a sufficient testimony of God's hatred against even the greatest wickedness, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, died for it. Nothing can show God's infinite abhorrence of any wickedness more than this. If the wicked man himself should be thrown into hell, and should endure the most extreme torments throughout eternity, it would not be a greater manifestation of God's abhorrence of it, than the sufferings of the Son of God for it.

2. God may save any man, woman, or child without prejudice to the honor of His majesty.

No matter how much men have insulted God, no matter how much contempt they have shown to His authority; still God can save them, if He pleases, and the honor of His majesty does not suffer in the least. If God should save those who have insulted Him, without payment for the dishonor they have shown to Him, then the honor of His majesty would suffer. For when contempt is cast upon infinite majesty, its honor suffers, and the contempt leaves a darkness on the honor of the divine majesty, if the injury is not repaired. But the sufferings of Christ do, in fact, fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and in the mediation suffers in His place, then it fully repairs the injury done to the majesty of heaven by the greatest sinner.

3. God may save any sinner whatsoever consistent with His justice.

The justice of God requires the punishment of sin. God is the Supreme Judge of the world, and He is to judge the world according to the rules of justice. It is not the duty of a judge to show favor to the person judged; but he is to determine according to a rule of justice without departing to the right hand or left. God does not show mercy as a judge, but as a sovereign. And therefore when mercy sought the salvation of sinners, the question was, how to make the exercise of the mercy of God as a

sovereign, and of the exercise His strict justice as a judge, agree together. And this was done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin was fully punished, and justice satisfied. Christ suffered enough for the punishment of the sins of the greatest sinner that ever lived. So that God, when He judges, may act according to a rule of strict justice, and yet acquit the sinner, if the sinner is in Christ. Justice cannot require any more for any man's sins, than those sufferings which Christ suffered. Romans 3:25, 26. “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice; so He may be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

4. God can save any sinner whatsoever, without any prejudice to the honor of His truth.

God has declared in His word, that sin would be punished with death, which is to be understood not only of the first physical death, but also of the second death-in the eternal Lake of Fire. God can save the greatest sinner consistent with His truth in this Divine threat. For sin is punished in the sufferings of Christ, inasmuch as He is our representative, and so is legally the same person, and sustained our guilt, and in His sufferings bore our punishment. Some may object, saying that God had said, When you eat of the forbidden fruit, then you will surely die; therefore, the same person that sinned must suffer; and doesn’t God's truth oblige Him to do that? I answer, that the word then was not intended to be restricted to Adam alone. Adam most likely understood that his descendents were included, whether they sinned in their own person or not. If they sinned in Adam, their representative, those words, "When you eat,” meant, “When you yourself eat, or if your representative eats,” then you yourself will surely die.”

II. But, God may refuse salvation to any sinner, without prejudice to the honor of any of His attributes.

There is no person in their natural sinful state, whom God has determined to refuse to bestow salvation, that can ever cause any dishonor to any part of God’s glory. Let a natural person be wise or unwise, of a good or ill-natured temper, whether born of wicked or godly parents; let him be a moral or immoral person, whatever good he may

have done, however religious he has been, how many prayers whatsoever he has made, and whatever pains he has taken that he may be saved; whatever concern and distress he may have for fear he shall be damned; or whatever circumstances he may be in; God can deny him salvation without the least criticism to any of His perfections. His glory will not in any instance be the least obscured by it.

1. God may deny salvation to any natural person without any injury to the honor of His righteousness.

If He does so, there is no injustice nor unfairness in it. God can take any natural man, whatever his case may be, God can deny him salvation, and throw him down into hell, and yet not be chargeable with the least unrighteous or unfair dealing in any respect whatsoever. This is evident, because all mankind have deserved hell: and it is no injustice for a righteous judge to inflict on any man or woman what they deserve. And since they have deserved condemnation, and have never done any thing to remove the liability, or to atone for the sin. They have never done anything which would obligate God not to punish them as they deserve.

2. God may deny salvation to any unconverted person without any prejudice to the honor of His goodness.

Sinners sometimes flatter themselves, that though the justice of God condemns them, yet it will not be consistent with the glory of His mercy. They think it will be dishonorable to God's mercy to throw them into hell, and show no pity or compassion on them. They think it would be very harsh and severe, and not becoming a God of infinite grace and tender compassion. But God can deny salvation to any natural person without any criticism to His mercy and goodness. That, which is consistent to God's justice, is not contrary to His mercy. If damnation is justice, then mercy may choose its own object. They mistake the nature of the mercy of God; they think that it is an attribute, which, in some cases, is contrary to justice. No, God's mercy is illustrated by it, as in the twenty-third verse of Romans, chapter 9, “He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory.”

3. God can deny salvation to anyone and never dishonor His

faithfulness.

God has in no way obliged Himself to any natural man by His Word to bestow salvation upon him. Men in their natural condition are not the children of promise; but lie open to the curse of the law, which would not be the case if they had any promise to lay hold of.

III. God does actually exercise His sovereignty in men's salvation.

1. God exercises His sovereignty by calling a people or a nation, and giving them the opportunities of grace, and leaving others without them.

According to the divine appointment, salvation is bestowed in connection with the provisions of grace. God may sometimes make use of very unlikely opportunities, and bestow salvation on men who are under very great disadvantages; but He does not bestow grace wholly without any means. But God exercises His sovereignty in bestowing those means. All nations are by nature in like circumstances towards God. Yet God greatly distinguishes some nations and peoples from others by the opportunities and advantages which He bestows upon them.

The American Indians, who in our day (the 1700's), live in the remote parts of this continent, and are under the grossest heathenish darkness, as well as the inhabitants of Africa, are naturally in exactly similar circumstances of sin towards God with us in this land. They are no more alienated or estranged from God in their natures than we are; and God has no more to charge them with, then He would us. And yet what a vast difference has God made between us and them! In this He has exercised His sovereignty. He did this long ago, when He chose only one people, to make them His covenant people, and to give them the opportunities of grace, and left all others, and gave them over to heathenish darkness and the tyranny of the devil, to perish from generation to generation for many hundreds of years.

The earth in that time was inhabited with many great and mighty nations. There were the Egyptians, a people famous for their wisdom. There were

also the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who were great, and wise, and powerful nations. There were the Persians, who by their strength and policy subdued a great part of the world. There were the renowned nations of the Greeks and Romans, who were famed over the whole world for their excellent civil governments, for their wisdom and skill in the arts of peace and war, and who by their military prowess subdued and reigned over the world. These nations were rejected! God did not choose them for His people, but left them for many ages under gross heathenish darkness, to perish for lack of vision; and chose one only people, the descendants of Jacob, to be His own people, and to give them the opportunities of grace. The Bible tells us that, “God has revealed His word to Jacob, His laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know His laws” (Psalm 147:19, 20). Israel was a small, insignificant people in comparison with other people, but the Bible declares this about God’s chosen people, “The LORD did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples” (Deuteronomy 7:7). And neither was it because of their righteousness; for they had no more of that than other people. God says, “Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people” (Deuteronomy 9:6). God shows them clearly, that it was from no other reason but His free electing love, that He chose them to be His people. That reason is given why God loved them; it was “because He loved them”-He simply chose to love them. (Deuteronomy 7:8). Which is the same as saying that it was agreeable to His sovereign pleasure, to set His love on them.

God also showed His sovereignty in choosing that people, when other nations were rejected, who came of the same ancestors. Thus the children of Isaac were chosen, when the descendants of Ishmael and other sons of Abraham were rejected. Likewise, the children of Jacob were chosen, when the descendants of Esau were rejected: as the apostle observes in the seventh verse, “Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned’ [Romans 9:7]: and again in verses 10, 11, 12, 13. “Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything

good or bad-in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls-she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" [Romans 9:10-13].

The apostle shows that the election extends not only to the persons of Isaac and Jacob over Ishmael and Esau; but also to their descendants. In the passage, already quoted from Malachi, God chooses nations, which were the descendants of Esau and Jacob; Malachi 1:2, 3. "'I have loved you,' says the LORD. 'But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' the LORD says. 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals'" [Malachi 1:2, 3]

God showed His sovereignty, when Christ came, in rejecting the Jews, and calling the Gentiles. God rejected that nation who were the children of Abraham according to the flesh, and had been His special people for many ages, and who alone possessed the one true God, and yet God chose the idolatrous heathen Gentiles over them, and called them to be His people. When the Messiah came, who was born of their nation, and whom they so much expected, He rejected them. "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him" [John 1:11].

When the glorious dispensation of the gospel came, God passed by the Jews, and called those who had been heathens, to enjoy the privileges of it. The Jews were broken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted in (Romans 11:17). "I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one" [Romans 9:25] And there are more children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband" [Isaiah 54:1]. The natural children of Abraham are rejected, and God raises up children to Abraham from stones. That nation, which was so honored of God, have now been for many ages rejected, and remain dispersed all over the world, a remarkable monument of divine vengeance. And further, God now greatly distinguishes some Gentile nations from others, and all according to His sovereign pleasure.

2. God exercises His sovereignty in the advantages He bestows upon individual persons.

Everyone needs salvation, and everyone is naturally, undeserving of it; but He gives some vastly greater advantages for salvation than others. To some He assigns their place in godly Christian families, where they may be well instructed and educated, and have Christian parents to dedicate them to God, and say many prayers for them. God places some under a more powerful ministry than others, and in places where there are more of the outpourings of the Spirit of God. To some He gives much more of the strivings and the awakening influences of the Spirit, than to others. It is according to His mere sovereign pleasure.

3. God exercises His sovereignty in sometimes bestowing salvation on the lowly and poor, and denying it to the wise and great.

Christ in His sovereignty passes by the gates of princes and nobles, and enters some cottage and dwells there, and has communion with its obscure inhabitants. God in His sovereignty withheld salvation from the rich man, who lived luxuriously every day, and bestowed it on poor Lazarus, who sat begging at his gate. God in this way pours out contempt on princes, and on all their glittering splendor. So God sometimes passes by wise men, men of great understanding, learned and great scholars, and bestows salvation on others of weak understanding, who only comprehend some of the plainer parts of Scripture, and the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. Yes, there seem to be fewer great men called, than others. And God in ordering it thus manifests His sovereignty. The Apostle Paul said, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are” [1 Corinthians 1:26-28].

4. God exercises His sovereignty in bestowing salvation on some who have had very few advantages in life.

God sometimes will withhold salvation from those who are the children of very devout parents, and bestow it on others, who have been brought

up in wicked families. Thus we read of Abijah, the only good son of the wicked Jeroboam, and of a godly Hezekiah, the son of wicked Ahaz, and of a godly Josiah, the son of a wicked Amon. But on the contrary, of a wicked Amnon and Absalom, the sons of holy David, and that vile Manasseh, the son of godly Hezekiah.

Sometimes some, who have had obvious opportunities of grace, are rejected, and left to perish, and others, under far less advantages, are saved. Thus the scribes and Pharisees, who had so much light and knowledge of the Scriptures, were mostly rejected, and the poor ignorant tax collectors saved. The greater part of those, heard Christ preach many times, and saw Him work miracles from day after day, yet they were not chosen to receive salvation; and yet the woman of Samaria was chosen for eternal life, and many other Samaritans at the same time, who only heard Christ preach, as He occasionally passed through their city. So the woman of Canaan was elected for salvation, who was not of the country of the Jews, and only once saw Jesus Christ. So the Jews, who had seen and heard Christ, and saw His miracles, and with whom the apostles labored so much, were not saved. But the Gentiles, many of them, who, as it were, only briefly heard the good news of salvation, embraced those truths, and were converted.

5. God exercises His sovereignty in calling some to salvation, who have been dreadfully wicked, and leaving others, who have been moral and religious persons.

The Pharisees were a very strict sect among the Jews. Their religion was extraordinary. (Luke 18:11). They were not like other men, extortioners, unjust, or adulterers-that was their morality. They fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed-that was their religion. But yet, for the most part, they were rejected, and the tax collectors, and prostitutes, and openly vicious sorts of people, entered into the kingdom of God before them. (Matthew 21:31). The Apostle Paul describes his righteousness while he was a Pharisee, saying, “as for legalistic righteousness, I was faultless” (Philippians 3:6). The rich young man, who fell on his knees before Christ, saying, ‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”-this man was a moral person. When Christ told him keep the commandments, he said, with all sincerity, “all these I have

kept since I was a boy." He had obviously been brought up in a good family, and was a youth of such agreeable manners and correct behavior, that it is said, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." Still he was not chosen; while the thief on the cross, that was crucified with Christ, was chosen and called. God sometimes shows His sovereignty by showing mercy to the worst of sinners, on those who have been murderers, and blasphemers. And even when they are old, some are called at the eleventh hour. God sometimes shows the sovereignty of His grace by showing mercy to some, who have spent most of their lives in the service of Satan, and have little left to spend in the service of God.

6. God exercises His sovereignty, in saving some of those who seek salvation, and not others.

Some who seek salvation, as we know both from Scripture and observation, are quickly converted; while others seek for a long time, and do not obtain it. God helps some over the mountains and difficulties which are in the way; He subdues Satan, and delivers them from his temptations: but others are ruined by the temptations with which they meet. Some are never thoroughly awakened; while to others God is pleased to give thorough convictions. Some are left to backsliding hearts; others God causes to hold out to the end. Some are brought down from a confidence in their own righteousness; others never get over that obstruction in their way, as long as they live. And some are converted and saved, who never strived after salvation, as others who, in the end, perish.

IV. I come now to give the reasons, why God exercises His sovereignty in the eternal salvation of mankind.

1. It is agreeable to God's design in the creation of the universe to exercise every attribute, and thus to manifest the glory of each of them.

God's design in the creation was to glorify Himself, and to cause creation to discover the essential glory of His nature. It was fitting that infinite glory should shine forth; and it was God's original design to manifest His true glory. It was not His design to manifest all of His glory to the point where it would bring on great fear of His creatures; for it is impossible

that the minds of creatures could comprehend it. But it was His design to make a true manifestation of His glory, such as should represent every attribute. If God glorified one attribute, and not another, such manifestation of His glory would be defective; and the representation would not be complete. If all God's attributes are not manifested, then the glory of none of them is manifested as it is: for the divine attributes reflect glory on one another.

Thus if God's wisdom was manifested, and not His holiness, the glory of His wisdom would not be manifested as it truly is; for one part of the glory of the attribute of divine wisdom is, that it is a holy wisdom. So if His holiness were manifested, and not His wisdom, the glory of His holiness would not be manifested as it is; for one thing which belongs to the glory of God's holiness is, that it is a wise holiness.

So it is with respect to the attributes of mercy and justice. The glory of God's mercy does not appear as it is, unless it is manifested as a just mercy, or as a mercy consistent with justice. Likewise, with respect to God's sovereignty, it reflects glory on all His other attributes. It is part of the glory of God's mercy, that it is sovereign mercy. So all the attributes of God reflect glory on one another. The glory of one attribute cannot be manifested, as it is, without the manifestation of another. One attribute is defective without another, and therefore the manifestation will be defective. Therefore it was the will of God to manifest all of His attributes.

The declarative glory of God in Scripture is often called God's *name*, because it declares His nature. But if His name does not signify His nature as it truly is, or does not declare any attribute, it is not a true name. The sovereignty of God is one of His attributes, and a part of His glory. The glory of God eminently appears in His absolute sovereignty over all creatures, great and small. If the glory of a prince is His power and dominion, then the glory of God is His absolute sovereignty. In this appears God's infinite greatness and majesty above all creatures. Therefore it is the will of God to reveal His sovereignty. And His sovereignty, like His other attributes, is manifested in the exercises of it. He glorifies His power in the exercise of power. He glorifies His mercy in the exercise of mercy. So also He glorifies His sovereignty in the exercise of sovereignty.

2. The greater the creature is, over whom God is sovereign, and the greater the extent of the creature's power, then the more glorious is His sovereignty.

The sovereignty of God in His being sovereign over men, is more glorious than in His being sovereign over the inferior creatures. And His sovereignty over angels is even more glorious that His sovereignty over men. For the more noble the creature is, then the greater and higher does God appear in His sovereignty over it. It is a greater honor to a man to have dominion over men, than over animals; and a still greater honor to have dominion over princes, nobles, and kings, than over ordinary men. So the glory of God's sovereignty appears in that He is sovereign over the souls of men, who are so noble and excellent creatures. God therefore will exercise His sovereignty over them. And the further the dominion of any one extends over another, the greater will be the honor. If a man has dominion over another only in some instances, he is not as exalted, as he is in having absolute dominion over his life, and fortune, and all that he has.

So God's sovereignty over men appears glorious, that it extends to everything which concerns them. He may dispose of them with respect to all that concerns them, according to His own pleasure. His sovereignty appears glorious, in that it reaches their most important affairs, even the eternal state and condition of the souls of men. In this it appears that the sovereignty of God is without bounds or limits, in that it reaches to a matter of such infinite importance-eternal life. Therefore, God has determined to manifest His own glory, by exercising His sovereignty over men, especially over their souls and bodies, even in this most important matter of their eternal salvation. ***"God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden."*** .

APPLICATION

Let me close with five points of Application:

1. We learn how absolutely dependent we are on God in this

great matter of the eternal salvation of our souls.

We are dependent not only on His wisdom to arrange a way to accomplish it, and on His power to bring it to pass, but we are also dependent on His mere will and pleasure in the matter. We depend on the sovereign will of God for everything belonging to it, from the foundation to the very top. It was because of the sovereign pleasure of God, that He designed a way to save some of mankind, and gave us Jesus Christ, His one and only Son, to be our Redeemer.

Why did God look on mankind with favor, and send us a Savior, and yet never did the same for the fallen angels? It was simply because of the sovereign pleasure of God. His sovereign grace gave us the Bible, and the truths of Christianity. His giving of those blessed things to us rather than to others, His giving the awakening influences of His Spirit, and His bestowing saving grace, are all of His sovereign pleasure. When he says, "Let there be light in the soul of that person," it is a word of infinite power and sovereign grace.

2. Let us with the greatest humility adore the awesome and absolute sovereignty of God.

As we have just seen, it is an eminent attribute of the Divine Being, that He is sovereign over the souls of men and women, and that in every respect, even in their eternal salvation. The infinite greatness of God, and His exaltation above us, appears in nothing more, than in His sovereignty. It is spoken of in Scripture as a great part of His glory.

Deuteronomy 32:39, "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand."

Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him."

Daniel 4:34, 35, "His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to

Him: 'What have you done?'

Our Lord Jesus Christ praised and glorified the Father for the exercise of His sovereignty in the salvation of men: when He said,

Matt. 11:25, 26. "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

Friends, let us therefore give God the glory of His sovereignty, by adoring Him, whose sovereign will orders all things, seeing ourselves as nothing in comparison with Him. Dominion and sovereignty require humble reverence and honor of the subject. The absolute, universal, and unlimited sovereignty of God requires, that we should adore Him with all possible humility and reverence-He has our absolute eternal destiny in His hands and can dispose of us as He pleases.

3. Those who are have received salvation are to attribute it to sovereign grace alone, and to give all the praise to Him, who makes them to differ from others.

Godliness is no cause for glorying, except in God., The Bible says, "No one may boast before Him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:29-31). No one, by any means, in any degree are to attribute their godliness, their safe and happy state and condition, to any natural difference between them and other men, or to any strength or righteousness of their own. They have no reason to exalt themselves in the least degree; but God is the being whom they should exalt. They should exalt God the Father, who, before they were born, and even before the world was created, chose them in Christ, who then set His love on them, and gave them salvation.

If they ask, why God set His love on them, and chose them rather than others, if they think they can see any reason apart from God's mere

sovereign pleasure, then they are badly mistaken. They should exalt God the Son, who bore their names on His heart, when He came into the world, and hung on the cross, and in whom alone they have righteousness and strength. They should exalt God the Holy Spirit, who of sovereign grace has called them out of darkness into marvelous light; who has by His own immediate and free operation, led them into an understanding of the evil and danger of sin, and stripped them of their own righteousness, and opened their eyes to discover the glory of God, and the wonderful riches of God in Jesus Christ, and has sanctified them, and made them new creatures. When they hear of the wickedness of others, or look upon depraved persons, they should remember how wicked they once were, and how much they provoked God, and how they deserved to be left forever to perish in their sin, and that it is only sovereign grace which has made the difference. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul the Apostle spells out many different kinds of sinners, the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, and homosexuals. And then in the eleventh verse, the apostle tells them, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” The people of God have a greater reason to be thankful, and more reason to love God, who has bestowed such great and unspeakable mercy on them, strictly out of His mere sovereign pleasure.

4. We learn why we must admire the grace of God, that He would condescend to become bound to us by covenant;

That He, who is naturally supreme in His dominion over us, who is our absolute master, and can do with us as He pleases, and is under no obligation to us; that this same God should, as it were, relinquish His absolute freedom, and should cease to be sovereign in His dispensations towards believers, when once they have believed in Christ, and would, for their consolation, become bound. So that they can challenge salvation of this Sovereign; they can demand it through Christ, as a debt. And it would be dishonoring to the glory of God's attributes, to deny it to them; it would be contrary to His justice and faithfulness. What wonderful condescension is it in such a Being, to become bound to us, worms of the dust, for our consolation! He bound Himself by His word, His promise.

But He was not satisfied with that; but that we might have stronger consolation still, He Has bound Himself by His oath. The writer of Hebrews says, “When God made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.’ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Let us, therefore, labor to submit to the sovereignty of God. God insists, that His sovereignty be acknowledged by us, and especially His sovereignty over our own eternal salvation, a matter which so nearly and infinitely concerns us. This is the stumbling-block on which thousands fall and perish; and if we go on challenging God about His sovereignty, it will be our eternal ruin. It is absolutely essential that we submit to God, as our absolute sovereign, and the sovereign over our souls; as one who ***“has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and hardens whom He wants to harden.”*** .

5. And lastly. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God will guard those who seek salvation from two opposite extremes- presumption and discouragement.

Do not presume upon the mercy of God, and so encourage yourself in sin. Many hear that God's mercy is infinite, and therefore think, that if they delay seeking salvation for the present, and seek it later in life, that God will bestow His grace upon them. But consider, that though God's grace is sufficient, yet He is sovereign, and will use His own pleasure to determine whether He will save you or not. If you put off salvation till the end of

your life, salvation will not be in your power. It will be as a sovereign God pleases, whether you shall obtain it or not. Therefore, seeing that in this matter you are so absolutely dependent on God, it is best to follow His direction in seeking it, which is to listen to His voice, which says, “Today, if you hear My voice, do not harden your hearts” [Psalm 95:7-8].

Beware also of discouragement. Take heed of despairing thoughts, because you are a great sinner, because you have persevered so long in sin, have backslidden, and resisted the Holy Spirit. Remember that, no matter what your case may be, no matter how great a sinner you are, God can bestow mercy upon you without the least prejudice to the honor of His holiness, which you have offended, or to the honor of His majesty, which you have insulted, or of His justice, which you have made your enemy, or of His truth, or of any of His attributes. Let you be what sinner you may, God can, if He pleases, greatly glorify Himself in your salvation. Amen.

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Man's Natural Blindness in Things of Religion

"Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge,
shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." -- **Psalm 94:8-11**

Subject: There is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion that naturally possesses the hearts of mankind.

SECTION I

Introductory observations.

In these words the following particulars are to be observed. (1.) A certain spiritual *disease* charged on *some* persons, *viz.* darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly. (2.) The great *degree* of this disease; so as to render the subjects of it *fools. Ye fools, when will ye be wise?* And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness. Ye brutish among the people.* This ignorance and folly were to such a degree, as to render men like beasts. (3.) The *obstinacy* of this disease; expressed in that interrogation, *When will ye be wise?* Their blindness and folly were not only very great; but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure. (4.) Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts. And had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know, and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men. (5.) The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not *hear,* did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he, who gave power of perceiving words to *others,* should not perceive them *himself.* And the *sottishness* of their being insensible of God's all-seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed the eye and gave others a power* of seeing. The sottishness of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The unreasonableness of their expecting to escape God's just chastisements and judgments for sin is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen,* who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they. (6.) We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of* MAN, *that they are vanity.* The psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men. And immediately upon it he observes that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural to mankind.*

From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal

observation: THAT THERE IS AN EXTREME AND BRUTISH BLINDNESS IN THINGS OF RELIGION, WHICH NATURALLY POSSESSES THE HEARTS OF MANKIND. — This doctrine is not to be understood as any reflection on the *capacity* of the human nature. For God has made man with a noble and excellent capacity. The blindness I speak of is not merely *negative* ignorance, such as in trees and stones that know nothing. They have no faculties of understanding and perception, whereby they should be capable of any knowledge. And inferior animals, though they have *sensitive* perception, are not capable of any *intellectual* views. There is no fault to be found with man's *natural* faculties. God has given men faculties truly noble and excellent, well capable of true wisdom and divine knowledge. Nor is the blindness I speak of like the ignorance of a new-born infant, which arises from want of necessary opportunity to exert these faculties.

The blindness that is in the heart of man, which is spoken of in the text and doctrine, is neither for want of *faculties,* nor *opportunity* to know, but from some positive cause. ***2*** There is a principle in his heart, of such a blinding and besotting nature, that it hinders the exercises of his *faculties* about the things of religion, exercises for which God has made him well capable, and for which he gives him abundant opportunity.

In order to make it appear that such an extreme brutish blindness, with respect to the things of religion, does naturally possess the hearts of men, I shall show how this is manifest in those things that appear in men's open profession. And how it is manifest in those things that are found by inward experience, and are visible in men's practice.

SECTION II

Man's natural blindness in religion, manifested by those things which appear in men's open profession.

I WOULD now show, how it is manifest that there is a sottish and brutish blindness in the hearts of men in the things of religion, by those things which appear in men's open profession.

I. It appears in the *grossness* of that ignorance and those delusions which have appeared among mankind. Man has faculties given him whereby he is well capable of inferring the being of the Creator from the creatures. The invisible things of God are very plainly and clearly to be seen by the things that are made. And the perfections of the Divine Being, his eternal power and Godhead, are very manifest in the works of his hands. And yet grossly absurd notions concerning the Godhead have prevailed in the world. Instead of acknowledging and worshipping the *true* God, they have fallen off to the worship of idols. Instead of acknowledging the *one* only true God, they have made a *multitude* of deities. Instead of worshipping a God, who is an almighty, infinite, all-wise, and holy Spirit, they have worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; and the works of their own hands, images of gold and silver, brass and iron, wood and stone; gods that can neither hear, nor see, nor walk, nor speak, nor do, nor know anything. Some in the shape of men, others in the shape of oxen and calves; some in the shape of serpents, others of fishes, etc.

The sottishness of men in thus worshipping the lifeless images which they themselves have made, is elegantly and forcibly represented by the prophet Isaiah. “The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms. Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line: he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; for he will take thereof and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire: with part thereof he eateth flesh: he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. They have not known, nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see, and their

hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire, yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it, and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" (Isa. 44:12-19).

Many of the images which the heathen worshipped were made in the most *monstrous* and *terrible* shapes they could devise. And the more hideous and frightful they appeared, the better they supposed they would serve their turn for gods. Some of their images were made so as to be the most *unclean* representations; images of men openly exposing their nakedness. These unclean images, they judged, appeared in a god-like manner, and worthy to be worshipped. Many, instead of worshipping a holy and good God, and infinitely perfect Being, ascribed *vices* to many of the gods which they worshipped. One god they reckoned notorious for *drunkenness;* others notorious for *uncleanness*. To others they ascribed *lying* and *stealing;* to others *cruelty;* and yet looked upon them worthy to be worshipped as gods! Many worshipped *devils,* who appeared to them, and whom they themselves reckoned to be evil spirits. But yet built temples, and offered sacrifices to them because they were afraid of them. Many worshipped *beasts* and *birds* and *fishes*. And the most hateful and loathsome animals were most worshipped. Particularly, *serpents* were more commonly worshipped than any other beast. Many worshipped *rivers* and *trees* and *mountains*. They worshipped many *diseases*. There is scarcely anything of which men have not made gods.

And so far has that principle of *blindness* prevailed, with respect to the things of religion, that it has in a great measure extinguished all light in the minds of many, even in matters of *morality,* and things that have but a distant relation to religion. So that many whole nations have professedly approved of many things directly contrary to the light of nature. And the most *horrid vices* and immoralities have been esteemed *harmless,* yea, accounted *virtues* among them, such as *revenge, cruelty,* and *incest*. Many nations have openly allowed the practice of *sodomy*. And with some it has been accounted commendable to marry their nearest relations. Many have even worshipped their gods in their temples with acts of *drunkenness* and *whoredom,* and the most abominable

lewdness. And the more filthy they were in their uncleanness, they thought their gods the more pleased and delighted with it.

Many nations have been so under the influence of mental blindness that they have been void of all *civility,* and have been reduced to a state very little above the beasts in their common customs, and ordinary way of living, and in a great many things far below the beasts, being, if I may so speak, much more beastly than the beasts themselves. Now this has not been, because these men, with whom this has been the case, have not had the same *faculties* that we have. That we are not as ignorant as they, is not because we have better natural understandings, or that our minds are by nature more clear, and our eyes more discerning, or that our hearts are not naturally so inclined to sottishness and delusion as theirs. But only because God has not left us so much to ourselves, as he has them. He has given us more instruction to help us against our delusions. God has so ordered it in his providence that we should have his good word to instruct us. And has caused that we should grow up from our infancy under Christian instruction.

II. The extreme blindness and sottishness in things of religion, which is naturally in the hearts of men, appears not only in embracing and professing those errors that are very great, but also those that are so *unnatural.* They have not only embraced errors which are very contrary to *truth,* but very contrary to *humanity,* not only against the light of nature, but against the more innocent inclinations of nature. Such has been, and still is, the blindness of many nations in the world, that they embrace those errors which do not only exclude all true virtue, all holy dispositions, but those that have swallowed up the more harmless inclinations of human nature.

Thus they have embraced many gross delusions that are as contrary as possible to *natural affection.* Such as offering up their own children in sacrifice to their idol, which has been a common thing in the heathen world. And the parents have not only offered them up to *death,* but they have brought them, and offered them up to the most *cruel* and *tormenting* deaths: as, to be *burnt alive,* to be *broiled* to death in burning brass; which was the way of offering up children to Moloch. The image of the idol being made of brass, in a horrid shape, was heated red hot. And

the poor child was laid naked in this burning brass, and so burnt to death. And the *parents themselves* brought the child to this offering, however sweet and pleasant a child it might be. And thus the innocent child was tormented till it died, without any regard to its piteous cries. And it has been the manner of some nations, to offer in sacrifice the fairest and best beloved child that they had. And thus many thousands of poor babes have been offered up. So strong has been the tendency of the hearts of men to delusion, that it has thus overcome those strong natural affections which men have to the fruit of their own bodies.

And many of these delusions have been against men's natural love of their own ease, and aversion to pain. Many have worshipped their idols, and do so to this day, with such rites as are most painful and tormenting, cutting, gashing, and mangling their own flesh. Thus they sottishly worshipped Baal of old. "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." (1 Kin. 18:28). And it is still the custom in some nations grievously to torment themselves, to kindle a fire to scorch their own bodies in a most miserable manner, and to put themselves to various and long-continued torments to please their idols. And it is the manner in some countries for persons, on certain occasions, to *kill* themselves, yea, to put themselves to *cruel* deaths, to cast themselves into great fires, and there burn themselves to death. How powerful must be the delusions of the human mind, and how strong the tendency of the heart to carry them such a length, and so to overcome the tenderest feelings of human nature!

III. The extreme blindness of the mind of man will appear further, if we consider how *general* gross ignorance and delusion has been. It has for the most part prevailed through the greater part of the world. For most of the time from Noah's flood to the coming of Christ, all nations, except the children of Israel, were overspread with gross heathenish darkness; being given up to the most vain and ridiculous notions, and all manner of superstitious, barbarous, absurd, and unnatural practices. And, for the greater part of the time since, most nations of the world have been covered with gross darkness.

So it is at this day. Many nations are under *popish* darkness, and are in such gross delusions that they worship the Virgin Mary, and a great

multitude of dead men, whom their church has canonized for saints, some real saints, and others abominably wicked men. So they worship the *bread* in the sacrament, and account it not only the real body of Christ, but real Christ in body and soul, and divinity. They carry a *wafer,* a small piece of bread, in procession, fall down before it, *adore* it, and account it Christ himself, both in his divine and human nature. And yet believe that the body of Christ is in heaven, and in ten thousand different places on earth at the same time. They think they can do works of *supererogation;* that is, *more* good works than they are *obliged* to do, whereby they bring God into debt to them. They whip themselves, and put themselves to other ridiculous penances and sufferings, whereby they think they appease the anger of God for their sins. And they pay money to the priests to *buy* the pardon of their sins. Yea, they buy indulgences for *future* crimes, or pardon for sins before they commit them. They think they defend themselves from evil spirits, by sprinkling holy water. They pay money to buy the souls of their departed friends out of purgatory. They worship the *relics* of dead saints, such as pieces of their bones, their teeth, their hair, pieces of their garments, and the like. And innumerable other such foolish delusions are they under.

A great part of the nations of the world are *Mahometans;* many of the articles of whose belief are too childish and ridiculous to be publicly mentioned in solemn assembly. — But the greater part of the inhabitants of the world are to this day gross, barbarous *heathens,* who have not the knowledge of the true God, but worship *idols* and *devils,* with all manner of absurd and foolish rites and ceremonies, and are destitute of even common civility: multitudes of nations being like beasts in human shape. — Now this barbarous ignorance and gross delusion being of such great extent and continuance, shows that the cause is *general,* and that the defect is in the *corrupted nature* of mankind, man's natural blindness and proneness of his heart to delusion.

IV. The sottish blindness and folly of the heart of men appears in their being so *prone* to fall into such gross delusions, *soon* after they have been favored with *clear* light. Were not the minds of men exceeding dark, they never would entertain such absurd notions at all. For they are as contrary as possible to reason. Much less would they fall into them after they had

once been instructed in the truth. For, were it not very strange and great sottishness indeed, they would — when they come to be informed of the truth, and have opportunity to compare it with those gross errors — behold such a reasonableness in the truth, and such absurdity in those errors, that they would never be in danger of being deluded by them any more. But yet so it is. Mankind, after they have been *fully instructed,* and have lived in *clear light,* have, time after time, presently lost the knowledge of the truth, and have exchanged it for the most barbarous and brutish notions.

So it was early after the flood, whereby the wicked world, those that were visibly so, were destroyed; and none were left but those who professed the true religion. And they had such an eminently holy man as Noah to instruct them. And though the true God had so wonderfully and astonishingly manifested himself in that great work of vengeance against his enemies; yet the posterity of Noah, in great part, presently lost the knowledge of the true God, and fell away to idolatry, and that even while Noah was living. And the ancestors of Abraham were tainted with that idolatry, even Terah his own father. "And Joshua said unto all the people, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood," etc. (Jos. 24:2, 3, 4). It seems as though Abraham was called away from his father's house, and from his own country, for this reason that the country was overrun with idolatry.

And even many of the posterity of *Abraham* and *Isaac* — Abraham's posterity by Hagar and Keturah, and that part of Isaac's posterity which were of Esau — though the true religion was so thoroughly taught and practiced in the houses of those holy patriarchs, and God had from time to time so wonderfully and miraculously manifested himself to them, yet — soon cast off the true God, and fell away to idolatry. For, not very long after, we read of the posterity of Jacob as being the *only* people of God, that he had in all the earth. — And so the people of that part of the land of Canaan, who were under that holy king Melchizedeck, soon totally cast off the worship of the one only true God, which he taught and maintained. For before Joshua brought in the children of Israel, the

inhabitants of that land were wholly given to idolatry. So the people of the land of Uz, who were under the government of so great and holy a man as Job, soon lost the knowledge of the true God, and all those religious truths which were then known among them, and sunk into gross idolatry.

So the posterity of *Jacob,* themselves — though God had manifested himself to them, and had wrought such wonders for them in the time of Jacob and Joseph, yet — presently fell to worship the gods of Egypt. This appears from the words of Joshua, "Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt." (Jos. 24:14). And how soon did they fall to worship a golden calf in the wilderness, in the midst of the wonderful and miraculous manifestations of the one only true God! And notwithstanding idolatry was so strictly forbidden, and the folly and wickedness of it so clearly manifested, in the law of Moses and in God's providence. Yet, how soon did they fall into idolatry after they were brought into the land of Canaan! And when God raised up eminent men, judges to instruct and govern them, and reclaim them from their idolatrous practices, from time to time. Though they professed to be convinced of their foolish delusion, yet they would soon fall again into the most sottish idolatry. And this they did soon after such great light as they enjoyed in the time of Samuel, David, and Solomon. And so, from time to time, down to the Babylonish captivity.

And in the *apostles'* times, when such great things were done to rouse the attention of mankind, and such great light was spread over many nations, multitudes, after they had been instructed in the Christian religion by the apostles and others, fell away into the grossest heresies, and embraced the most corrupt and absurd notions. — After the Roman empire had been converted from heathenism to Christianity, and the light of the gospel had driven out the sottish ignorance and gross absurdities of pagan idolatry, in which they had continued so long, they soon began to fall away from the truth into *antichristian* superstition and idolatry, in which are opinions and practices no less absurd than those of the heathen. And a great part of the Christian world fell away to Mahometanism.

And since the *reformation,* wherein God wonderfully restored gospel light in a great part of the Christian world, which was but about two

hundred years ago, many are fallen away again, some to *popery,* some to gross *heresies,* and some to *atheistical* principles. So that the reformed church is greatly diminished. — And as to our nation in particular, which has been a nation favored with light, since the reformation, above most, if not any in the world; how soon has it in great part fallen away! A great part of it to *atheism, deism,* and gross *infidelity*. And others to Arminianism, and to the Socinian and Arian heresies, to believe that Christ is a created dependent God. And to hold other foolish absurdities! And many have of late openly disputed and denied the moral evil of some of the greatest and most heinous vices.

These things show how desperately prone mankind are to blindness and delusion, how addicted they are to darkness. — God now and then, by his instructions lifts up some nations out of such gross darkness. But then, how do they sink down into it again, as soon as his hand is withdrawn! Like a heavy stone, which, though it may be forced upwards, yet sinks down again. And will continue to sink lower and lower with a swift progress, if there be nothing to restrain it. That is the woeful tendency of the mind of man since the fall, notwithstanding his noble powers and faculties; even to sink down into a kind of brutality, to lose and extinguish all useful light, and to sink lower and lower into darkness.

V. The extreme and brutish blindness that possesses the hearts of men naturally, appears in their being so *confident* in gross errors and delusions. Some things mentioned already show how confident and assured they are, particularly, their running such great ventures as offering up their children and cutting and mangling themselves. Multitudes live and die in the most foolish and absurd notions and principles, and never seem to make any *doubt* of their being in the right.

The *Mahometans* seem to make no doubt but that, when they die, they shall go to such a paradise as Mahomet has promised them. Where they shall live in all manner of sensual pleasures, and shall spend their time in gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Mahomet promised them that all who die in war for the defense of the Mahometan religion, shall go to this paradise. And they make no doubt of it. Therefore, many of them, as it were, willingly rush on upon the point of the sword.

The *papists,* many of them at least, make no doubt of the truth of those foolish notions of a *purgatory,* and the power of the priests to deliver them out of it, and give them eternal life. And therefore will not spare vast sums of money to purchase deliverance from those imaginary torments. How confident are many *heretics* in the grossest heresies! and how bold are many *deists* in their infidelity!

VI. The desperateness of that blindness which is in the heart of man, appears, in that no nation or people in the world ever have had any remedy or deliverance from such gross ignorance and delusion, from *themselves*. No instance can be mentioned of any people whatsoever, who have once fallen into heathenish darkness, or any other gross superstitions and ridiculous opinions in religion, that ever had any remedy by any wisdom of their *own*. Or that have, of themselves, grown wiser by the improvement of their own faculties, and by instructing one another. Or that ever had any remedy at all, by the teaching of any wise men, who did not professedly act as moved and directed of God, and did not declare, that they had their instructions, in the first place, from him.

Thus in the *heathen* world. Before Christ's time, the whole world, except the Jews, lay in their darkness for a great many hundred years, even beyond all time of which they had any certain history among them. And there was no remedy, nor any appearance of a remedy; they continued, ages after ages, waxing worse and worse, sinking deeper and deeper. Among all the many nations in the world, no one ever bethought themselves, and emerged out of their brutish darkness. There were indeed some nations that emerged out of slavery, cast off the yoke of their enemies, grew great, and conquered great part of the world. But they never conquered the blindness of their own hearts.

There were some nations who excelled in other knowledge, as the Greeks and Romans. They excelled in policy, and in the form of their civil government. They had wise political rulers. They had excellent laws for regulating their civil state, many of which have been imitated, as a pattern, by many Christian nations ever since. They excelled many other nations in arts, government, and civility, almost as much as men in common do beasts. Yet they never could deliver themselves from their *heathenism*. Though they were so wise in other things, yet in matters of

religion they were very absurd and brutish. For even the Greeks and Romans, in their most flourishing state, worshipped innumerable gods. And some to whom they ascribed great *vices*. And some they worshipped with most obscene and horrid rites. To some they offered *human* sacrifices. The Romans had a temple dedicated to the *furies,* which they worshipped. And they had a multitude of childish notions and fables about their gods.

And though there were raised up some wise men and philosophers among the Greeks and Romans, who borrowed some things concerning the true God from the Jews; yet their instructions never were effectual to deliver any one *people,* or even one *city* or *town,* from their barbarous heathenism, or so much as to get *any one society,* or company of men, to unite in the *public worship of the true God*. And these philosophers themselves had many grossly absurd opinions, mingled with those scraps of truth which they had gathered up.

And the *Jews,* when fallen away to idolatry, as they often did, never recovered of *themselves*. Never any remedy appeared, unless God raised up, and extraordinarily moved, some person to reprove and instruct them. — And in *this age* of knowledge, an age wherein learning is carried to a great height, even many learned men seem to be carried away with the gross errors and fooleries of the *popish* religion.

Europe is a part of the world the most famed for arts and sciences of any. And these things have been carried to a much greater height in this age than in many others. Yet many learned men in Europe at this day, who greatly excel in human arts and literature, are still under popish darkness. A deceived heart has turned them aside. Nor do they seem to have any power to deliver their souls. Nor does it come into their minds that there is a lie in their right hands.

Many men in *France* and in other countries, who are indeed men of great learning, knowledge, and abilities, yet seem really to think that the church of Rome is the only true church of Christ. And are zealous to uphold and propagate it. And though now, within this hundred years, human learning has been very much promoted, and has risen to a greater height than ever in the world. And has greatly increased not only in our

nation, but in France and Italy, and other popish countries. Yet there seems to be no such effect of it, as any considerable turning from popish delusions. But the church of Rome has rather increased of late, than otherwise.

And in *England,* a land wherein learning flourishes as much as in any in the world, and which is perhaps the most favored with light of any, there are many men of vast learning, and great and strong reason, who have embraced, and do at this day embrace, the gross errors of the Arians and Deists. Our nation, in all its light and learning, if full of *infidels,* and those that are *further* from Christianity than the very Mahometans themselves. Of so little avail is human strength, or human reason and learning, as a remedy against the extreme blindness of the human mind. The blindness of the mind, or an inclination to delusion in things of religion is so strong that is will overcome the greatest learning, and the strongest natural reason.

Men, if let alone, will not help one another. Nor will they help themselves. The disease always proves without remedy, unless *God* delivers. This was observed of old. "And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes: a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? (Isa. 44:19, 20).

If God lets men alone, no light arises. But the darkness grows thicker and thicker. How is it now, at this very day, among all the nations where the light of the gospel has not come? Many of whose ancestors, without doubt, have been in the midnight darkness of heathenism for above three thousand years. And not one people have delivered themselves, who have not had the light of the gospel. And this is not owing to their want of as good *natural abilities* as we have. Nor is it because they have an inclination more to neglect their natural abilities, or make a worse improvement of them than we.

VII. The extreme blindness of man's heart, in matters of religion, appears

by men falling into gross delusions, or continuing in them, at the same time that they have been under *great means* of instruction from God. We have many instances of this; as Rachel in Jacob's family; and the Israelites in the wilderness, etc. These last had great means of instruction. Yet they set up the golden calf, etc. And after Joshua's time, they persisted in their delusions and folly, from time to time, even under the reproofs of the prophets, and even in such horrid delusions, so contrary to natural affection, as offering their children in sacrifice to Moloch, burning them alive, in a most cruel manner.

In the time of Christ and the apostles, the Jews had great means of instruction, and most of the nations of the world were put under great advantages to come to the knowledge of the truth. Yet what was the effect? It would be easy to pursue these remarks respecting the papists in the time of the reformation, and since — the Arians and Deists in our day, etc. — but what has been said may be quite sufficient, if the reader will but indulge reflection.

VIII. The exceedingly great blindness of men, in things of religion, appears in the endless *disputes* and controversies, that there have been, and are, among men, about those things which concern religion. — Of old, the wise men and philosophers among the *heathen,* were, so to speak, infinitely divided among themselves. Varro, who was one of them, reckons up several hundred opinions about that one point, *Wherein man's happiness consisted?* And they were continually in disputes one with another. But the effect of their disputes was not any greater union, or any better agreement in their opinions. They were as much divided after they had disputed many ages, as they were at first. Yea, much more.

So there have long been disputes in the *Christian* world about opinions and principles in religion. There is a vast variety of sects and opinions. And disputes have been carried on, age after age, with great warmth, and thousands of volumes have been written one against another. And all these disputes have not terminated the differences, but they still subsist as much as ever. Yea, they increase and multiply more and more. Instead of ending controversies by disputing, one dispute only lays a foundation for another. And thus the world goes on jangling and contending, daily writing and printing. Being as it were deluged with controversial books.

And all to no purpose.

The increase of human learning does not bring these controversies to an issue, but does really increase and multiply them. There probably never was a time in our nation wherein there was such a vast variety of opinions in matters of religion, as at this day. Every now and then, a new scheme of things is broached, and various and contrary opinions are mixed and jumbled, divided and subdivided. And every new writer is willing to have the credit of some new notion.

And after this manner does this miserable world go on in endless confusion, like a great multitude of fool-hardy persons, who go on in the dark, stumbling and justling one against another, without perceiving any remedy for their own, or affording any for their neighbor's, calamity. — Thus I have shown how the extreme blindness that possesses the hearts of men is manifest in what appears in their *profession*.

SECTION III

Men's extreme blindness manifested by inward experience, and especially in their practices under the gospel.

I COME now to show, how this is manifest in those things that are found by inward experience, and are visible in men's *practices* under the light of the gospel.

I. This appears in their being so *prone to be deceived* so many ways, or being liable to such a *multiplicity* of deceits. There are thousands of delusions in things which concern the affairs of religion, that men commonly are led away with, who yet live under the light of the gospel. — They are many ways deceived about *God*. They think him to be an exceeding diverse kind of being from what he is, altogether such an one as themselves (Psa. 50:21). They are deceived about his *holiness,* they do not realize it, that he is such a holy being as he indeed is, or that he hates sin with such a hatred as he declares he does. They are not convinced of his *truth,* or that he certainly will fulfill his threatenings or his promises.

They are not convinced of his *justice* in punishing sin, as he does. They have very wrong notions of *Christ*. They are not convinced of his *ability* to save them, or of the *sufficiency* of his sacrifice and righteousness, nor of his *willingness* to receive them.

Men are commonly subject to a great many errors about their *duty*. They are ready to bring their principles to agree with their practices, instead of bringing their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They will put innumerable false glosses on the rules of God's Word, to bend them to a compliance with their lusts. And so they "put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

They are subject to deceits and delusions about the things of *this world*. They imagine that there is happiness and satisfaction to be found in the profits, pleasures, and honors, which are to be had here. They believe all the deluding flatteries and promises of a vain world. And they will hold that deceit and grand delusion, *that these things are the highest good*. And will act accordingly; will choose these things for their portion. And they will hold and practice upon that error, that these things are of long continuance, and are to be depended upon.

They are greatly deceived about the things of *another world*. They undervalue that heavenly glory, which is promised to the saints. And are not much terrified with what they hear of the damnation of hell. They cannot realize it, that its torments are so dreadful as they hear, and are very ready to imagine that they are not eternal, but will some time or other have an end.

They are deceived about the state of *good men*. They think they are not happy, but live a melancholy life. And they are deceived about the *wicked*. They envy the state of many of them as accounting them well off. "They call the proud happy (Mal. 3:15), and bless the covetous, whom God abhors." (Psa. 10:3). And they strive a great deal more after such enjoyments as these have, than after such as are the portion of the godly.

They are subject to a thousand deceits and delusions about *themselves*. They think themselves wise, when they are fools. They are deceived about their own hearts. They think them much better than they really are. They

think they see many good things in themselves, when indeed there is nothing good there. They appear lovely in their own eyes, when their hearts are like the inside of a grave, full of dead men's bones and rotten flesh, crawling worms, and all uncleanness. Or rather, the inward vault of hell, that is a habitation of devils and every foul spirit. Those things in their hearts are highly esteemed by them, which are an abomination in the sight of God.

Men are very prone to be deceived about their own *state,* to think themselves something when they are nothing, and to suppose themselves "rich and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, when they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are greatly deceived about the *principles* they act from. They think they are sincere in that in which there is no sincerity. And that they do those things from love to God, which they do only from love to themselves. They call mere speculative or natural knowledge, spiritual knowledge; and put conscience for grace; a servile, for a childlike fear; and common affections, that are only from natural principles, and have no abiding effect, for high discoveries, and eminent actings of grace. Yea, it is common with men to call their vicious dispositions by the name of some virtue. They call their anger and malice, zeal for a righteous cause, or zeal for the public good. And their covetousness, frugality.

They are vastly deceived about their own *righteousness*. They think their affections and performances lovely to God, which are indeed hateful to him. They think their tears, reformations, and prayers, sufficient to make atonement for their sins, when indeed if all the angels in heaven should offer themselves in sacrifice to God, it would not be sufficient to atone for one of their sins. They think their prayers and works, and religious doings a sufficient price to purchase God's favor and eternal glory. When, as they perform them, they do nothing but merit hell.

They are greatly deceived about their *strength*. They think they are able to mend their own hearts, and work some good principles in themselves. When they can do no more towards it, than a dead corpse does towards raising itself to life. They vainly flatter themselves, they are able to come to Christ, when they are not. They are greatly deceived about the *stability* of their own hearts. They foolishly think their own intentions and

resolutions of what good they will do hereafter, to be depended on. When indeed there is no dependence at all to be had on them. They are greatly deceived about their *opportunities*. They think that the long continuance of their opportunity is to be depended on, and that tomorrow it is to be boasted of. When indeed there is the utmost uncertainty of it. They flatter themselves that they shall have a better opportunity to seek salvation hereafter, than they have now. When there is no probability of it, but a very great improbability.

They are greatly deceived about their own actions and *practices*. Their own faults are strangely hid from their eyes. They live in ways that are very unbecoming Christians, but yet seem not to be at all sensible of it. Those evil ways of theirs, which are very plain to others, are hid from them. Yea, those very things, which they themselves account great faults in others, they will justify themselves in. Those things for which they will be very angry with others, they at the same time do themselves, and oftentimes in a much higher degree, and never once think of it. While they are zealous to pull the mote out of their brother's eye, they know not that a beam is in their own eye.

Those sins that they commit, which they are sensible are sins, they are woefully deceived about. They call great sins, little ones. And in their own imaginations, find out many excuses, which make the guilt very small, while the many heinous aggravations are hid from their eyes. They are greatly deceived about themselves, when they compare themselves with others. They esteem themselves better than their neighbors, who are indeed much better than themselves. They are greatly deceived about themselves, when they compare themselves with God. They are very insensible of the difference there is between God and them, and act in many things as if they thought themselves his equals. Yea, as if they thought themselves above him. Thus manifold are the deceits and delusions that men fall into.

II. The desperate blindness that is natural to men appears in their being so ignorant and blind in things that are so clear and *plain*. Thus if we consider how great God is, and how dreadful sin against him must be, and how much sin we are guilty of, and of what importance it is that his infinite Majesty should be vindicated; how plain is it, that man's

righteousness is insufficient! And yet how greatly will men confide in it! How will they ascribe more to it, than can be ascribed to the righteousness of the sinless and glorious angels of heaven. What can be more plain in itself, than that eternal things are of infinitely greater importance than temporal things? And yet how hard is it thoroughly to convince men of it! How plain is it, that eternal misery in hell is infinitely to be dreaded! And yet how few appear to be thoroughly convinced of this! How plain is it, that life is uncertain! And yet how much otherwise do most men think! How plain is it, that it is the highest prudence in matters of infinite concern to improve the first opportunity, without trusting to another! But yet how few are convinced of this! How reasonable is it, considering that God is a wise and just being, to suppose that there shall be a future state of rewards and punishments, wherein every man shall receive according to his works! And yet, how does this seem like a dream to most men!

What can be in itself more plain and manifest, and easily to be known by us, if it were not for a strange blindness, than we are to ourselves, who are always with, never absent from ourselves; always in our own view, before our own eyes; who have opportunity to look into our own hearts, and see all that passes there? And yet what is there that men are more ignorant of, than they are of themselves! There are many vicious practices, the unlawfulness of which is very plain, the sins are gross, and contrary not only to the Word of God, but to the light of nature. And yet men will often plead, there is no harm in such sins. Such as, many acts of gross uncleanness; and many acts of fraud, injustice and deceitfulness; and many others that might be mentioned.

There is no one thing whatsoever more plain and manifest, and more demonstrable, than the being of a God. It is manifest in ourselves, in our own bodies and souls, and in everything about us wherever we turn our eye, whether to heaven, or to the earth, the air, or the seas. And yet how prone is the heart of man to call this into question! So inclined is the heart of man to blindness and delusion, that it is prone to even atheism itself.

III. The great blindness of the heart of man appears, in that so *little* a thing will deceive him, and confound his judgment. A little self-interest,

or only the bait of some short gratification of a sensual appetite, or a little stirring of passion, will blind men's eyes, and make them argue and judge most strangely and perversely, and draw the most absurd conclusion, such as, if they were indifferent, they would see to be most unreasonable. The devil finds easy work to deceive them a thousand ways; an argument of the great weakness and blindness of our minds. As a little child, weak in understanding, is very easily deceived.

IV. The woeful blindness that possesses the hearts of men naturally, appears in their being all totally ignorant of *that* in God, which they had most need to know; *viz.* the glory and *excellency* of his nature. Though our faculties, which we have above the beasts, were chiefly given us that we might know this, and though without this knowledge all other will signify nothing to us, and our faculties are as capable of it, as of any other knowledge whatsoever — and which is as plainly and abundantly manifested as anything whatsoever, innumerable ways, both in the word and works of God — yet all men naturally are totally ignorant of this. As ignorant as one born blind is of colors. Natural men of the greatest abilities and learning, are as ignorant of it as the weakest and the most unlearned. Yea, as ignorant as the very stocks and stones. For they see, and can see nothing at all of it.

V. It appears, in that they are so blind in those *same things* in religious matters, which they are sufficiently sensible of in other matters. In temporal things they are very sensible that it is a point of prudence to improve the first opportunity in things of great importance. But in matters of religion, which are of infinitely the greatest importance, they have not this discernment. In temporal matters they are sensible that it is a great folly long to delay and put off, when life is in danger, and all depends upon it. But in the concerns of their souls, they are insensible of this truth. So in the concerns of this world, they are sensible it is prudence to improve times of special advantage, and to embrace a good offer when made them. They are sensible that things of long continuance are of greater importance, than those of short duration. Yet in religious concerns, none of these things are sensibly discerned. In temporal things they are sufficiently sensible, that it is a point of prudence to lay up for hereafter, in summer to lay up for winter, and to lay up for their families,

after they are dead. But men do not generally discern the prudence of making a proper provision for a future state. — In matters of importance in this world, they are sensible of the wisdom of taking thorough care to be on sure grounds. But in their soul's concerns they see nothing of this. Our Savior observed this to be the case with the Jews when he was upon earth. "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth: but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:56)

VI. The desperate blindness that naturally possesses the hearts of men under the gospel, appears in their remaining so *stupidly insensible* and deceived, under so great means of instruction and conviction. If they were brought up under heathenish darkness, it would not be so full a demonstration of it. But thus they remain, though under the clearest light, under the glorious light of the gospel, where they enjoy God's own instructions in his word, in a great fullness and plainness, and have the evidence and truth of things set before them from time to time in the plainest manner. They have the arguments of God's being and perfection, and of another world. They are told how eternal things are of greater importance than temporal, and of what importance it is to escape eternal misery. How much it is worth while to take pains for heavenly glory, and how vain their own righteousness is. But yet to what little purpose!

And they have not only great means of instruction in God's Word, but also in providence. They have the evidence of the shortness and uncertainty of life. "He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." Yet "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. nevertheless man being in honor, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings." They find the world is vain and unsatisfactory. They find the great instability and treachery of their own hearts, and how their own good intentions and resolutions are not to be depended on. They often find by experience that their attempts to make them better, fail. But, alas! With what small effect!

Such abundant evidence is there, both in what appears in the *open profession* of men, and also by what is *found* in their *inward experience,*

and is *evident* in their *practice,* of the extreme and brutish ignorance and blindness, which naturally possess their hearts.

SECTION IV

Practical inferences and application of the subject.

HAVING shown how the truth of the doctrine is evident, both by what appears in men's *open profession,* and by those things which are *found* by *inward experience,* and are *manifest* by what is visible in men's *practice,* I proceed to improve the subject.

I. By this we may see how manifest are the *ruins* of the *fall* of man. It is observable in all the kinds of God's creatures that we behold, that they have those properties and qualities, which are every way proportioned to their end. So that they need no more, they stand in need of no greater degree of perfection, in order well to answer the special use for which they seem to be designed. The brute creatures, birds, beasts, fishes, and insects, though there be innumerable kinds of them, yet all seem to have such a degree of perception and perfection given them, as best suits their place in the creation, their manner of living, and the ends for which they were made. There is no defect visible in them. They are perfect in their kind. There seems to be nothing wanting, in order to their filling up their allotted place in the world. And there can be no reasonable doubt but that it was so at first with mankind. It is not reasonable to suppose, that God would make many thousands of kinds of creatures in this lower world, and one kind the highest of them all, to be the head of the rest, and that all the rest should be complete in their kinds, every way endowed with such qualifications as are proportioned to their use and end. And only this most noble creature of all, left exceeding imperfect, notoriously destitute of what he principally stands in need of to answer the end of his being. The principal faculty by which God has distinguished this noble creature from the rest, is his understanding. But would God so distinguish man in his creation from other creatures, and then seal up that understanding with such an extreme blindness, as to render it useless, as to the principal ends of it, and wholly to disenable him from

answering the ends of an intelligent creature, and to make his understanding rather a misery than a blessing to him, and rendering him much more mischievous than useful? Therefore, if the Scripture had not told us so, yet we might safely conclude, that mankind are not now, as they were made at first. But that they are in a *fallen* state and condition.

II. From what has been said, plainly appears the *necessity* of divine *revelation*. The deists deny the Scripture to be the Word of God, and hold that there is no *revealed religion,* that God has given mankind no other rule but his own reason, who is sufficient, without any word or revelation from heaven, to give man a right understanding of divine things, and of his duty. But how is it proved in fact? How much trial has there been, whether man's reason, without a revelation, would be sufficient or not! The whole world, excepting one nation, had the trial till the coming of Christ. And was not this long enough for trial, whether man's reason alone was sufficient to instruct him? Those nations, who all that time lay in such gross darkness, and in such a deplorable helpless condition, had the same natural reason that the deists have. And during this time, there was not only one man, or a succession of single persons, that had the trial, whether their own reason would be sufficient to lead them to the knowledge of the truth. But all nations, who all had the same human faculties that we have. If human reason is really sufficient, and there be no need of anything else, why has it never proved so? Why has it never happened, that so much as one nation, or one city or town, or one assembly of men, have been brought to tolerable notions of divine things, unless it be by the revelation contained in the Scriptures? If it were only one nation that had remained in such darkness, the trial might not be thought so great, because one particular people might be under some disadvantages, which were peculiar. But thus it has been with *all nations,* except those which have been favored with the Scriptures, and in *all ages*. Where is any people, who to this day have ever delivered themselves by their own reason, or have been delivered without light fetched from the Scriptures, or by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

If human reason is sufficient without the Scripture, is it not strange that, in these latter ages — since navigation has been so improved, and America and many other parts of the world have been discovered, which

were before unknown — no one nation has anywhere been found already enlightened, and possessed of true notions about the Divine Being and his perfections, by virtue of that human reason they have been possessed of so many thousand years? The many poor, barbarous nations here, in America, had the faculty of *reason* to do what they pleased with, *before* the Europeans came hither, and brought over the light of the gospel. If human reason alone was sufficient, it is strange, that no one people were found, in any corner of the land, who were helped by it, in the chief concern of man.

There has been a great trial, as to what men's reason can do without divine help, in those endless disputes that have been maintained. If human reason alone could help mankind, it might be expected that these disputes would have helped them, and have put an end to men's darkness. The heathen philosophers had many hundreds of years to try their skill in this way. But all without effect. That divine revelation, which the church of God has been possessed of, has been in the world "as a light shining in a dark place." (2 Peter 1:19) It is the only remedy which God has provided for the miserable, brutish blindness of mankind, a remedy without which this fallen world would have sunk down forever in brutal barbarism without any remedy. It is the only means that the true God has made successful in his providence, to give the nations of the world the knowledge of himself; and to bring them off from the worship of false gods.

If human reason be the *only* proper means, the means that God has designed for enlightening mankind, is it not very strange, that it has not been sufficient, nor has answered this end in any one instance? All the right *speculative* knowledge of the true God, which the deists themselves have, has been derived from divine revelation. How vain is it to dispute against fact, and the experience of so many thousand years! And to pretend that human reason is sufficient without divine revelation, when so many thousand years' experience, among so many hundreds of nations of different tempers, circumstances, and interests, has proved the contrary! One would think all should acknowledge, that so long a time is sufficient for a trial, especially considering the miseries that the poor nations of the world have been under all this while, for want of light: the

innumerable *temporal* calamities and miseries — such as sacrificing children, and many other cruelties to others, and even to themselves — besides that *eternal* perdition, which we may reasonably suppose to be the consequence of such darkness.

III. This doctrine should make us sensible, how great a *mercy* it is to mankind, that God has sent his own Son into the world, to be the *light* of the world. — The subject shows what great need we stand in of some *teacher* to be sent from God. And even some of the wiser men among the *heathen* saw the *need* of this. They saw that they disputed and jangled among themselves without coming to a satisfying discovery of the truth; and hence they saw, and spoke of, the need there was of a teacher sent from *heaven*. And it is a wonderful instance of *divine mercy* that God has so beheld us in our low estate, as to provide such a glorious remedy. He has not merely sent some *created angel* to instruct us, but his *own Son,* who is in the bosom of the Father, and of the same nature and essence with him. And therefore infinitely better acquainted with him, and more sufficient to teach a blind world. He has sent him to be the light of the world, as he says of himself, "I am come a light into the world." (John 12:46) When he came, he brought glorious light. It was like the day-spring from on high, visiting a dark world, as Zacharias observes (Luke 1:77, 78, 79). After Christ came, then the glorious gospel began to spread abroad, delivering those "that had sitten in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death."

What reason have we to rejoice, and praise God, that he has made such excellent provision for us, and has set so glorious a sun in our firmament, such a "Sun of righteousness," after we had extinguished the light which at first enlightened us, and had, as it were, brought the world into that state, in which it was when "without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of it." (Jer. 4:22, 23) — The glory of that light which God has sent into the world is fully answerable to the grossness of that darkness which filled it. For Christ who came to enlighten us is truth and light itself, and the fountain of all light. "He is *the light,* and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

IV. Hence we may learn, what must be the thing which will bring to pass those glorious days of light, which are spoken of in God's Word. —

Though mankind be fallen into such darkness, and the world be mostly in the kingdom of darkness; yet the Scripture often speaks of a *glorious day,* wherein light shall fill the earth. “For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” (Isa. 60:2, 3.) “And he will destroy in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” (Isa. 25:7) “The knowledge of God shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9)

By what we have heard, we may on good grounds conclude, that whenever this is accomplished, it will not be effected by human learning, or by the skill or wisdom of great men. What has been before observed of this learned age, is a presumptive evidence of it, wherein spiritual darkness increases with the increase of learning. God will again make foolish the wisdom of this world. And will, as it were, say in his providence, “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?”

When this shall be accomplished, it will be by *a remarkable pouring out of God’s own Spirit, with the plain preaching of the gospel of his Son,* the preaching of the spiritual, mysterious doctrines of Christ crucified, which to the learned men of this world are foolishness. Those doctrines, which are *the stumbling-block of this learned age.* “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” It will not be by the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Not by the wisdom of this world, nor by the princes of this world, that come to nought. But by the gospel, that contains the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world, who have nothing to enlighten them but their own learning, know anything of.

The Spirit of God, who searches all things, even the deep things of God, must reveal it. For let natural men be never so worldly wise and learned, they receive not the things of the Spirit. They are foolishness to them. Nor can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned. This great effect, when it is accomplished, will be a glorious effect indeed. And it will be accomplished in such a manner, as most remarkably to show it to be

the work of God, and his only. It will be a more glorious work of God than that which we read of in the beginning of Genesis. “And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters: and God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” (Gen. 1:2, 3)

V. Hence we may learn the misery of all such persons, as are under the power of that darkness which naturally possesses their hearts. There are two degrees of this misery.

First, that of which all who are in a natural condition are the subjects. The doctrine shows that all such as are in a natural condition, are in a miserable condition. For they are in an extremely dark and blind condition. It is uncomfortable living in darkness. What a sorrowful state would we all be in, if the sun should no more rise upon us, and the moon were to withdraw her shining, and stars to be put out, and we were to spend the rest of our time in darkness! The world would soon perish in such darkness. It was a great plague in Egypt, when they had a total darkness for three days. They who are deprived of sight, are deprived of the most noble of the senses. They have no benefit of eternal light, one of the most excellent and needful of all the things which God has made in the visible creation. But they who are without spiritual sight and light, are destitute of that which is far more excellent and necessary.

That natural men are not *sensible* of their blindness, and the misery they are under by reason of it, is no argument that they are not miserable. For it is very much the nature of this calamity to be hid from itself, or from those who are under it. Fools are not sensible of their folly. Solomon says, “the fool is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason.” (Pro. 26:16) The most barbarous and brutish heathens are not sensible of their own darkness, are not sensible but that they enjoy as great light, and have as good understanding of things, as the most enlightened nations in the world.

Second, another degree of this misery is of those who are judicially given up of God, to the blindness of their own minds. The Scripture teaches us that there are some such. “What then; Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were

blinded." (Rom. 11:7) "But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away." (2 Cor. 3:14) "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, and perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed." (Isa. 6:6, 10) This judgment, when inflicted, is commonly for the contempt and abuse of light which has been offered, for the commission of presumptuous sins, and for being obstinate in sin, and resisting the Holy Ghost, and many gracious calls and counsels, warnings and reproofs.

Who the particular persons are, that are thus judicially given up of God to the blindness of their minds, is not known to men. But we have no reason to suppose that there are not multitudes of them, and most in places of the greatest light. There is no manner of reason to suppose that this judgment, which is spoken of in Scripture, is in a great measure *peculiar* to those old times. As there were many who fell under it in the times of the prophets of old, and of Christ and his apostles. So doubtless there are now also. And though the persons are not known, yet doubtless there may be more reason to fear it concerning some than others. All who are under the power of the blindness of their own minds are miserable. But such as are given up to this blindness, are especially miserable. For they are reserved, and sealed over to the blackness of darkness forever.

SECTION V

Address to sinners.

THE consideration of what has been said of the desperate blindness which possesses the hearts of us all naturally, may well be terrifying to such as are yet in a Christless condition, in this place of light, where the gospel has been so long enjoyed, and where God has in times past so wonderfully poured out his Spirit.

And let such persons, for their awakening, consider the following things:

First, that they are blinded by the god of this world. Their blindness is from hell. This darkness which natural men are under, is from the prince of darkness. This the apostle says expressly of those who remain in unbelief and blindness under the gospel. “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.” (2 Cor. 4:3, 4) They belong to the kingdom of darkness. In that darkness which reigns in their souls, the devil reigns. And he holds his dominion there.

Second, consider how God in his word manifests his abhorrence and wrath towards those who remain so sottishly blind and ignorant, in the midst of light. How does God speak of them! “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?” (Psa. 14:4) “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.” (Psa. 95:10, 11) “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation! — they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.” (Isa. 1:3, 4) “It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.” (Isa. 27:10, 11) “My people is foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have non knowledge.” (Jer. 4:22) “Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in the house of Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not. Fear ye not ME, saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at MY presence?” (Jer. 5:20, 21, 22)

Third, consider how much *willfulness* there is in your ignorance. Sinners are ready wholly to excuse themselves in their blindness; whereas, as observed already, the blindness that naturally possesses the hearts of men, is not a merely negative thing. But they are blinded by “the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:13) There is a perverseness in their blindness. There is not a mere absence of light, but a malignant opposition to the light. As God says, “they know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness.” (Psa. 82:5) Christ observes, “that

every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light." And that "this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, yet men loved darkness rather than light." (John 3:19, 20) And I may appeal to your own consciences, whether you have no willfully rejected the many instructions you have had, and refused to hearken? Whether you have not neglected to seek after the light, and neglected your Bible? Whether you have not been a very negligent hearer of the word preached, and neglected other proper means of knowledge? Whether you have not neglected to cry to God for that wisdom which you need? Yea, have you not resisted the means of knowledge? Have you not resisted and quenched the motions of the Spirit, which at times you have had? And taken a course to make yourself more and more stupid, by stifling the convictions of your own conscience, and doing contrary to the light thereof; whereby you have done those things that have tended to sear your conscience, and make yourself more and more senseless and sottish?

Fourth, consider what is the course that God will take to teach those who will not be taught by the instructions of his word. He will teach them by briers and thorns, and by the flames of hell. Though natural men will remain to all eternity ignorant of the excellency and loveliness of God's nature, and so will have no spiritual knowledge; yet God in another world will make them thoroughly to understand many things, which senseless unawakened sinners are sottishly ignorant of in this world. Their eyes in many respects shall be thoroughly opened in hell. Their judgments will be rectified. They shall be of the same judgment with the godly. They shall be convinced of the *reality* of those things which they would not be convinced of here: as the being of God, his power, holiness, and justice, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, that Christ is the Son of God, and that time is short and uncertain. They will be convinced of the vanity of the world, of the blessed opportunity they had in the world, and how much it is men's wisdom to improve their time. We read of the rich man, who was so sottishly blind in this world, that "in hell he lift up his eyes, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." (Luke 16:23) With many men, alas! the first time they open their eyes is in hell.

God will make all men to know the truth of those great things which he

speaks of in his word, one way or another. For he will vindicate his own truth. He has undertaken to convince all men. They who will not be convinced in this world, by the gentle and gracious methods which God uses with them now, shall be convinced hereafter by severe means. If they will not be convinced for salvation, they shall be convinced by damnation. God will make them know that he is the Lord. And he will make them know that he bears rule. “Consume them in wrath, that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth.” (Psa. 59:13) “Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame, and perish. That men may know that thou, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.” (Psa. 83:17, 18)

What great care we had need all have, that we be not deceived in matters of religion. If our hearts are all naturally possessed with such an extreme brutish ignorance and blindness in things of religion, and we are exceedingly prone to delusion, then surely great care ought to be taken to avoid it. For that we are naturally prone to delusion, shows our danger. But the greater our danger of any calamity is, the greater had our watchfulness need to be. — Let us therefore be hence warned to take heed that we be not deceived about our duty, about our own hearts, about our ways, about our state, and about our opportunities. Thousands are deceived in these things, and thousands perish by that means. Multitudes fall on our right hand and on our left, and are ruined eternally by their delusion in these things.

How foolish a thing it is for men to lean to their own understanding, and trust their own hearts. If we are so blind, then our own wisdom is not to be depended on, and that advice of the wise man is most reasonable. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.” (Pro. 3:5) “And he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool.” (Pro. 28:26) — They therefore are fools, who trust to their own wisdom, and will question the mysterious doctrines of religion, because they cannot see through them, and will not trust to the infinite wisdom of God.

Let us therefore become fools. Be sensible of our own natural blindness and folly. There is a treasure of wisdom contained in that one sentence; “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become

a fool, that he may be wise." (1 Cor. 3:18) Seeing our own ignorance, and blindness, is the first step towards having true knowledge. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. 8:2)

Let us ask wisdom of God. If we are so blind in ourselves, then knowledge is not to be sought for out of our own stock, but must be sought from some other source. And we have no where else to go for it, but to the fountain of light and wisdom. True wisdom is a precious jewel. And none of our fellow-creatures can give it us, nor can we buy it with any price we have to give. It is the sovereign gift of God. The way to obtain it is to go to him sensible of our weakness, and blindness, and misery on that account. "If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God." (Jam. 1:5).

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God Makes Men Sensible of Their Misery Before He Reveals His Mercy and Love

"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." -- Hosea 5:15

Subject: That 'tis God's manner to make men sensible of their misery and unworthiness, before he appears in his mercy and love to them.

In the preceding part of the chapter is threatened the destruction of Ephraim. Ephraim, in the prophets, generally means the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, as distinguished from the kingdom of Judah. When we read of Ephraim and Judah in the prophets, thereby is meant the whole people of Israel of the twelve tribes, as in verse 12 of this chapter, "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah

as rottenness." By Judah is meant the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which were under the king of Judah, and by Ephraim is meant the ten tribes under the king of Israel. Ephraim is put for the whole kingdom of Israel, because Samaria, the seat of the kingdom, the royal city, was in that tribe. In the verse immediately preceding the text it is declared in what a terrible manner God was about to deal with Ephraim. (Hos. 5:14) "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear and go away, and none shall rescue him." In the text God declares how he would deal with them after he had torn as a lion, etc. And here,

First, God declares how he would withdraw from them. "I will go and return to my place;" when I have torn as a lion. I will go away; I will leave them in that condition. I will depart from them, and they shall see no more of me.

Second, what God will wait for in them before he returns to them to show them mercy. There are three things here signified.

1. That they should be sensible of their guilt. "Till they acknowledge their offense." It is in the original, "till they become guilty." That is, till they become guilty in their own eyes, till they are sensible of their guilt; in the same sense as the same expression is used in Rom. 3:19, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God:" that is, become guilty in their own eyes.

2. That they would be sensible of their misery, implied in the expression, "in their affliction they shall seek me." Their calamity was brought upon them, before God had torn them, and left them. But in their pride and perverseness, they were not well sensible of their own miserable condition, as this prophet observes in Hos. 7:9.

3. That they should be sensible of their need of God's help, which is implied in their seeking God's face, and seeking him early, that is, with great care and earnestness. Before, they would not seek God. They were not sensible of their helplessness, as we learn in the verse but one preceding the text. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb." But

as we are there told, he could not heal him, nor cure his wound. And notwithstanding all the help he could afford, God wounded him, tore him as a young lion, and as he declares, would leave him, and he should cease going to any other, and should be sensible that no other could heal, and accordingly come to him for healing.

Doctrine. That it is God's manner to make men sensible of their misery and unworthiness, before he appears in his mercy and love to them.

I. That it is ordinarily thus with respect to the bestowment of great and signal mercies.

II. That it is particularly so with respect to revealing his love and mercy to their souls.

III. That they are made sensible of the desert of their sin.

I. This is God's ordinary way before great and signal expressions of his mercy and favor. He very commonly so orders it in his providence, and so influences men by his Spirit, that they are brought to see their miserable condition as they are in themselves, and to despair of help from themselves, or from an arm of flesh, before he appears for them, and also makes them sensible of their sin, and their unworthiness of God's help. This appears from the account which the Scriptures give us of God's dealings with his people. Joseph, before his great advancement in Egypt, must lie in the dungeon to humble him, and prepare him for such honor and prosperity. The children of Jacob, before Joseph reveals himself to them, and they receive that joy, and honor, and prosperity, which were consequent thereupon, pass through a train of difficulties and anxieties, till at last they are reduced to distress, and are brought to reflect upon their guilt, and to say, that they were verily guilty concerning their brother. God humbled them in his providence, and then an end was put to all their difficulties, and their sorrow was turned into joy upon Joseph's revealing himself to them. Jacob, before he hears the joyful news of Joseph's being yet alive, must be brought into great distress at the parting with Benjamin, and supposed loss of Simeon. He was reduced to great straits in his mind. He says in Gen. 42:36, "All these things are against me." But soon after this he had these gladsome tidings brought to

him, “Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” And to confirm it, he sees the wagons and the noble presents, which Joseph sent to him, so that he was now brought to say, “It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.” And so with the children of Israel in Egypt. Their bondage must wax more and more extreme. Their bondage had been very extreme. But yet Pharaoh gives commandment that more work should be laid upon them, and the task-masters tell them they must get their straw where they can find it, and nothing of their work should be diminished. And quickly upon this was their deliverance. So when the children of Israel were brought to the Red sea, the Egyptians pursued them, and were just at their heels, and they were reduced to the utmost distress. They see that they must assuredly perish, unless God work a miracle for them, for they were shut up on all sides: the Red sea was before them, and the army of the Egyptians encompassing them round behind. And they cried unto the Lord. And then God wonderfully appeared for their help, and made them pass through the Red sea, and put songs of deliverance into their mouths.

So before God brought the children of Israel into Canaan, he led them about in a great and terrible wilderness through a train of difficulties and temptations for forty years, that he might teach them their dependence on him, and the sinfulness of their own hearts. Deu. 32:10, “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” God brought them into those trials and difficulties in the wilderness to humble them, and let them see what was in their hearts, that they might be convinced of their own perverseness by the many discoveries of it under those temptations, and so that they might be sensible that it was not for their righteousness that God made them his people, and gave them Canaan, seeing it was so evident that they were a stiff-necked people. Deu. 8:2, 3, “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the

Lord doth man live." And Deu. 8:15-17, "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." And so we have examples of this from time to time in the history of the Judges. When Israel revolted, God gave them into the hands of their enemies. He let them continue in their hands, till they were reduced to great distress, and saw that they were in a helpless condition, and were brought to reflect on themselves, and to cry unto the Lord. And then God raised them up a deliverer. And when they cried unto God, he would not deliver them till he had humbled them, and brought them to own their unworthiness, and to own that they were in God's hands. Judges 10 beginning with the 10th verse, "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Balaam. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more, Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord; and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." And this is the method in which God declared from the beginning he would proceed with his people. Lev. 26:40, etc. "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with

Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall accept the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God." It is God's manner, when he will bestow signal blessings in answer to prayer, to make men seek them and pray for them with a sense of sin and misery. As 1 Kin. 8:38, 39, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house; then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." By knowing the plague of their own hearts is meant both their sin and misery. Being sensible of their misery is included, as is evident from the manner of expressing the same petition of Solomon's prayer, as it is related in 2 Chr. 6:29, "Then what prayer or supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every man shall know his own sore and his own grief." By which is probably meant his misery and his sin, which is the foundation of it. Paul gives us an account how God brought him to have despair in himself before a great deliverance, which he experienced. 2 Cor. 1:9, 10, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death." How did Christ humble the woman of Canaan, or bring her to the exercise and expression of a sense of her own unworthiness before he answered her, and healed her daughter! When she continued to cry, after he answered her not a word, and seemed to take no notice of her, and his disciples desired him to send her away, and when she continued crying after him, he gave a very humbling answer, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." And when she took it well, as owning that being called a dog was not too bad, and owning that she was therefore unworthy of children's bread, she only

sought the crumbs, then Christ answered her request. And the experience of God's people in all ages corresponds with those examples. It is God's usual method before remarkable discoveries of his mercy and love to them, especially by spiritual mercies, in a special manner to humble them, and make them sensible of their misery and helplessness in themselves, and of their vileness and unworthiness, either by some remarkably humbling dispensation of his providence or influence of his Spirit.

We are come now,

II. To show particularly that it is God's manner to make men sensible of their misery and unworthiness before he reveals his saving love and mercy to their souls. The mercy of God, which he shows to a sinner when he brings him home to the Lord Jesus Christ, is the greatest and most wonderful exhibition of mercy and love, of which men are ever the subjects. There are other things, in which God greatly expresses his mercy and goodness to men, many temporal favors. The mercies already mentioned, which God bestowed upon his people of old: his advancing Joseph in Egypt, his deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt, his leading them through the Red sea on dry land, his bringing them into Canaan, and driving out the heathen from before them, his delivering them from time to time from the hands of their enemies, were great mercies. But they were not equal to this of his people from under the guilt and dominion of sin. Several of them were typical of this, and as God would thus prepare men for the bestowment of those less mercies by making them sensible of their guilt and misery, so especially will he so do, before he makes known to them this great love of his in Jesus Christ. When God designs to show mercy to sinners, it is his manner thus to begin with them.

He first brings them to reflect upon themselves, and consider and be sensible what they are, and what condition they are in. What has already been said proves this. There is a harmony between God's dispensations. And as we see that this is God's manner of dealing with men when he gives them other great and remarkable mercies and manifestations of his favor, it is a confirmation that it is his method of proceeding with the souls of men, when about to reveal his mercy and love to them in Jesus

Christ.

First, God makes men consider and be sensible of what sin they are guilty. Before, it may be, they were very regardless of this. They went on sinning, and never reflected upon what they did. [They] never considered or regarded what or how many sins they committed. They saw no cause why they should trouble their minds about it. But when God convinces them, he brings them to reflect upon themselves. He sets their sins in order before their eyes. He brings their old sins to their minds, so that they are fresh in their memory — things which they had almost forgotten. And many things, which they used to regard as light offenses, which were not wont to be a burden to their consciences, nor to appear worthy to be taken notice of, they are now made to reflect upon. Thus they discover of what a multitude of transgressions they have been guilty, which they have heaped up till they are grown up to heaven. There are some sins especially, of which they have been guilty, which are ever before them, so that they cannot get them out of their minds. Sometimes when men are under conviction, their sins follow them, and haunt them like a specter. God makes them sensible of the sin of their hearts, how corrupt and depraved their hearts are. And there are two ways in which he does this. One is by setting before them the sins of their lives. They are so set in order before them, they appear so many and so aggravated, that they are convinced what a fountain of corruption there is in their hearts. Their sinful natures appear by their sinful lives. There is sin enough, which every man has committed, to convince him, that he is sold under sin, that his heart is full of nothing but corruption, if God by his Spirit leads him rightly to consider it.

Another way which God sometimes makes use of, is to leave men to such internal workings of corruption under the temptations which they have in their terrors and fears of hell, as shows them what a corrupt and wicked heart they have. God sometimes brings this good out of this evil, to make men see the corruption of their nature by the workings of it under temptations, which they have in their terrors about damnation. God leads them through the wilderness to prove them, and let them know what is in their hearts, as he did the children of Israel, as we have already observed. By means of the trials which the children of Israel had in the wilderness,

they might be made sensible what a murmuring, perverse, rebellious, unfaithful, and idolatrous people they were. So God sometimes makes sinners sensible what wicked hearts they have, by their experience of the exercises of corruption, while they are under convictions. Not that this will in the least excuse men for allowing such workings of corruption in their hearts, because God sometimes leaves men to be wicked, that he may afterwards turn it to their good, when he in infinite wisdom sees meet so to do. We must not go and be wicked on purpose that we may get good by it. It will be very absurd, as well as horridly presumptuous, for us so to do. Though God sometimes in his sovereign mercy makes those workings of corruption, and a spirit of opposition and enmity against God, a means of showing them the vileness of their own hearts, and so to turn to their good. So God oftentimes is provoked thereby utterly to withdraw and forsake them, after the example of those murmurers, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, of whom God sware in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest. And they who allow themselves therein, are the most likely so to provoke God. But it is God's manner to show men the plague of their own hearts by some means or other, before he reveals his redeeming love to their souls. While sinners are unconvinced, sin lies hid. They take no notice of it. But God makes the law effectual to bring men's own sins of heart and life to be reflected on, and observed. Rom. 7:9, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived." Then sin appeared and came to light, which was not before observed. Joseph's revealing himself to his brethren, is probably typical of Christ's revealing himself to the soul of a sinner, making known himself in his love, and in his near relation of a brother, and a redeemer of his soul. But before Joseph revealed himself to them, they were made to reflect upon themselves, and say, "we are verily guilty."

Second, God convinces sinners of the dreadful danger they are in by reason of their sin. Having their sins set before them, God makes them sensible of the relation which their sin has to misery. And here are two things of which they are convinced about their danger.

1. God makes them sensible that his displeasure is very dreadful. Before they heard often about the anger of God, and the fierceness of his wrath,

but they were not moved by it. But now they are made sensible that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They are made in some measure sensible of the dreadfulness of hell. They are led with fixedness of impression to think what a dismal thing it will be to have God an enraged enemy, setting to work the misery of a soul, and how dismal it will be to dwell in such torment forever without hope. Isa. 33:14 "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Other sinners are told of hell, but convinced sinners often have hell, as it were, in their view. Their being impressed with a sense of the dreadfulness of its misery, is the cause why it works upon their imagination oftentimes, and it will seem as though they saw the dismal flames of hell; as though they saw God in implacable wrath exerting his fury upon them; as though they heard the cries and shrieks of the damned.

2. They are made in some measure sensible of the connection there is between their sins and that wrath, or how their sin and guilt exposes them to that wrath, of the dreadfulness of which they have such lively apprehensions, and so fear takes hold of them. They are afraid that will be their portion. And they are sensible that they are in a miserable and doleful condition by reason of sin. Many things in the Scriptures make it evident that this is God's method. The account we have of our first parents confirms it. They had a sense of guilt and danger, before Christ was revealed to them. They were guilty, and were afraid of God's wrath, and ran and hid themselves. They were terribly afraid when they heard God coming. And doubtless their sense of their guilt and fear, when they were brought before God, and were called to an account, and God asked them what they had done, and whether they had eaten of that tree, whereof he commanded them that they should not eat, prepared them for a discovery of mercy. God made them sensible of their guilt and danger before he revealed to them the covenant of grace. And it is probable that their reflecting upon what God said about the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head, soon wrought faith: that it was not long before the discovery God made of a merciful design towards them was a means of true consolation and hope to them. Joseph's brethren were brought into great distress for fear of their lives before Joseph revealed himself to

them. Those who were converted by Peter's sermon were first pricked in their hearts in a sense of their guilt and their danger. Acts 2:37. And Paul, before he had his first comfort, trembled, and was astonished. Acts 9:6. And continued three days and three nights, and neither ate nor drank, which expressed his great distress. The jailer, before he was converted, was in terror. He called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. Acts 16:29, 30. Christ's invitation is made more especially to the weary and heavy laden, which doubtless has respect, at least partly, to laboring and being weary with a sense of guilt and danger. We read when David was in the cave, that everyone who was in distress, was gathered unto him. 1 Sam. 22:1. This doubtless was written as typifying Jesus Christ, and the referring of those who were in fear and distress unto him. The expression of flying for refuge, by which coming to Christ is signified, implies that before they come, they are in fear of some evil. They apprehend themselves in danger, and this fear gives wings to their feet. Pro. 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." The voice of God to a sinner, when he gives him true comfort, is a still small voice. But this voice is preceded by a strong wind, and a terrible earthquake, and fire, as it was in Horeb when Elijah was there. 1 Kin. 19:11, 12, "And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

Another thing in the Scriptures, which seems to evince this, is the frequent comparison made between the church spiritually bringing forth Christ, and a woman in travail, in pain to be delivered. John 16:21 and Rev. 12:2. The conversion of a sinner is represented by the same thing. It is bringing forth Christ in the heart. Paul speaks of men's regeneration as of Christ being brought forth in them. Gal. 4:19. And therefore Christ calls believers his mother. Mat. 12:49, 50, "And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

III. They are made sensible of the desert of their sin: that their sin

deserves that wrath of God to which it exposes them. They are not only sensible of the dreadfulness of God's wrath, how fearful a thing it would be to fall into the hands of the living God, and to sustain the eternal expressions of his fierce anger, as well as of the connection between their sins and this wrath, and how their sins expose them to it, but God is also wont, before he comforts them, to show them that their sins deserve this wrath. By a clear discovery of the connection between their sin and God's wrath, they are sensible of their danger of hell, of which many are in a measure sensible, who are wholly insensible of their desert of hell. The threatenings of the law make them afraid indeed, that God will punish sins. Yet they have no thorough apprehension of their desert of the punishment threatened, and therefore many, who are afraid, murmur against God. They charge him foolishly with being hard and cruel. But it is God's manner before he speaks peace to them, and reveals his redeeming love and mercy in Jesus Christ, to make them sensible that they also deserve it. Thus Mat. 18:24-26, "And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Very commonly when men are first made sensible of their danger, their mouths are open against God and his dealings, that is, their hearts are full of murmurings. But it is God's manner before he comforts and reveals his mercy and love to them, to stop their mouths, and make them acknowledge their guilt, or their desert of the threatened punishment. Rom. 3:19, 20, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." God would convince men of their guilt before he reveals a pardon to them. Now a man cannot be said to be thoroughly sensible of his guilt, till he is sensible that he deserves hell. A man must be sensible that he is guilty of death, or guilty of damnation, to use the scriptural mode of expression, before God will reveal to him his freedom from damnation. A sense of guilt consists in two things — in a sense of

sin, and in a sense of the relation which sin has to punishment. Now the relation which sin has to punishment, is also twofold. *First,* the connection which it has with punishment, by which it exposes to it, and brings it. *Secondly,* its desert of punishment. When a man is truly convinced of his desert of the punishment to which his sin exposes him, then he may be said to be thoroughly sensible of his guilt. Then he is become guilty, in the sense of our text, and in the sense of Rom. 3:20.

Inquiry. How is it that a sinner is made sensible of his desert of God's wrath? A natural man may have a sense of this, though not the same sense which a person may have after conversion, because a natural man cannot have a true sight of sin, and of the evil of it. A man cannot truly know the evil of sin against God, except it be by a discovery of his glory and excellence. Then he will be sensible how great an evil it is to sin against him. Yet it cannot be denied that natural men are capable of a conviction of their desert of hell, or that their consciences may be convinced of it without a sight of God's glory. The consciences of wicked men will also be convinced of the justice of their sentence and of their punishment at the day of judgment, and doubtless will echo to the sentence of the Judge, and condemn them to the same punishment. Here, therefore, we would inquire how it is that a natural man may be made sensible of this. *First,* we shall show what is the principle assisted. *Second,* how it is assisted. And *third,* what are the chief external means which are used in order to this.

First, what principle in man is assisted in convincing him of his desert of eternal punishment? No new principle is infused. Natural men have only natural principles, and therefore all that is done by the Spirit of God before regeneration is by assisting natural principles. To observe, therefore, in answer to this inquiry,

That the principle, which is assisted in making natural men sensible of their desert of wrath, is natural conscience. Though man has lost a principle of love to God, and all spiritual principles, by the fall, yet natural conscience remains. Now there are two things, which are the proper work of natural conscience. One is to give man a sense of right and wrong. A natural man has no sense of the beauty and amiability of virtue, or of the turpitude and odiousness of vice. But yet every man has that

naturally within, which testifies to him that some things are right, and others wrong. Thus if a man steals, or commits murder, there is something within, which tells him that he has done wrong. He knows that he has not done right. Rom. 2:14, 15, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing, one another." And the other work of natural conscience is to suggest the relation there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. Man has that in him, which suggests to him, when he has done ill, a relation between that ill and punishment. If a man has done that which his conscience tells him is wrong, is unjust, his conscience tells him that he deserves to be punished for it. Thus natural conscience has a twofold power; a teaching or accusing, and a condemning power. The Spirit of God, therefore, assists natural conscience the more thoroughly to do this, its work, and so convinces a man of sin. Conscience naturally suggests, when he has done a known evil, that he deserves punishment, and being assisted to its work thoroughly, a man is convinced that he deserves eternal punishment. Though natural conscience does remain in the man since the fall, yet it greatly needs assistance in order to its work. It is greatly hindered in doing its work by sin. Everything in man, which is part of his perfection, is hindered and impaired by sin. A faculty of reason remains since the fall, but it is greatly impaired and blinded. So natural conscience remains, but sin, in a great degree, stupefies it, and hinders it in its work. Now when God convinces a sinner, he assists his conscience against the stupefaction of sin, and helps it to do its work more freely and fully. The Spirit of God works immediately upon men's consciences. In conviction their consciences are awakened. They are convinced in their consciences. Their consciences smite them and condemn them.

Second, it may be inquired how God assists natural conscience so as to convince the sinner of his desert of hell? I answer,

1. In general, it is by light. The whole work of God is carried on in the heart of man from his first convictions to his conversion by light. It is by discoveries which are made to his soul. But by what light is it, that a

sinner is made sensible that be deserves God's wrath? It is some discovery that he has, which makes him sensible of the heinousness of disobeying and casting contempt upon God. The light which gives evangelical humiliation, and which makes man sensible of the hateful and odious nature of sin, is a discovery of God's glory and excellence and grace. But what is it which a natural man sees of God, which makes him sensible that sin against God deserves his wrath. For he sees nothing of the excellence and loveliness of God's glory and grace? I answer,

2. Particularly, it seems to be a discovery of God's awful and terrible greatness. Natural men cannot see anything of God's loveliness, his amiable and glorious grace, or anything which should attract their love, but they may see his terrible greatness to excite their terror. Wicked men in another world, though they do not see his loveliness and grace, yet they see his awful greatness, and that makes them sensible of the heinousness of sin. The damned in hell are sensible of the heinousness of their sin. Their consciences declare it to them. And they are made sensible of it by what they see of the awful greatness of that Being, against whom they have sinned. And wicked men in this world are capable of being made sensible of the heinousness of sin the same way. If a wicked soul is capable while wicked of receiving the discoveries of God's terrible majesty in another world, it is capable of it in this. God may, if he pleases, make wicked men sensible of the same thing here. And in this way natural men may be so made sensible of the heinousness of sin, as to be convinced that they deserve hell, as is evident in that it is by this very means, that wicked men will be made sensible of the justice of their punishment in another world, and at the day of judgment. For then the wicked will see so much of the awful greatness of God, the Judge, that it will convince their consciences what a heinous thing it was in them to disobey and contemn such a God, and will convince them that they therefore deserve his wrath. Which shows that wicked men are capable of being convinced in the same way. A wicked man, while a wicked man, is capable of hearing the thunders, and seeing the devouring fire, of mount Sinai, that is, he is capable of being made sensible of that terrible majesty and greatness of God, which was discovered at the giving of the law. But this brings me to the

Third, thing, *viz.* the principal outward means, which the Spirit of God makes use of in this work of convincing men of their desert of hell. And that is *the law*. The Spirit of God in all his work upon the souls of men, works by his Word. And in this whole work of conviction of sin, that part of the word is principally made use of; *viz.* the Law. It is the law which makes men sensible of their sin; and it is the law, attended with its awful threatenings and curses, which gives a sense of the awful greatness, the authority, the power, the jealousy of God. Wicked men are made sensible of the tremendous greatness of God, as it were, in the same manner in which the children of Israel were, *viz.* by the thunders, and earthquake, and devouring fire, and sound of the trumpet, and terrible voice at mount Sinai. All the people who were in the camp trembled, and they said, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die." So that it is the law, which God makes use of in assisting the natural conscience to do its work. Gal. 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It is the law which God makes use of, to make men sensible of their guilt, and to stop their mouths. Rom. 3:19, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." It is the law, which kills men as to trusting in their own righteousness. "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Gal. 2:19, "For I through the law am dead to the law." Conviction, which precedes conversion, is of sin and misery. But men are not thoroughly sensible of their sin or guilt, till they are sensible they deserve hell; nor thoroughly sensible of their misery, till they are sensible they are helpless.

Fourth, it is God's manner to make men sensible of their helplessness in their own strength. It is usual with sinners, when they are first made sensible of their danger of hell, to attempt by their own strength to save themselves. They in some measure see their danger, and endeavor to work out their own deliverance. They are striving to make themselves better. They strive to convert themselves, to work their hearts into a believing frame, and to exercise a saving trust in Christ. Having heard that if ever they believe, they must put their trust in Christ, and in him alone, for salvation, they think they will trust in Christ and cast their souls upon him. And this they endeavor to do in their own strength. This

is very common with persons upon a sick bed, when they are afraid that they shall die and go to hell, and are told that they must put their trust in Christ alone for salvation. They attempt to do it in their own strength. So sinners will be striving without a sense of their insufficiency in themselves to bring their own hearts to love God, and to choose him for their portion, and to repent of their sins. Or they strive to make themselves better, that so God may be more willing to convert them and give them his grace, and enable them to believe in Christ, and love God, and repent of their sins. But before God appears to them as their help and deliverance, it is his manner to make them sensible that they are utterly helpless in themselves. They are brought to despair of help from themselves. There is a death to all their hopes from themselves. Rom. 7:9. Before God opens the prison doors, he makes them see that they are shut up, that they are close prisoners, and that there is no way in which they can escape. Christ tells us in Isa. 61:1 that he was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, and to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Christ was sent to open the prison to them that are not only really, but sensibly, bound. Gal. 3:23, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, that should afterwards be revealed." God makes men sensible that they are in a forlorn condition, that they are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, before he comforts them. Christ tells us in John 9:39, "For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind;" meaning, partly at least, by those that see, those who think they see: having respect to the Pharisees, who were proud of their knowledge, and by the blind, those who are sensibly blind. This is emblematically represented by Saul's blindness before his first comfort. He was blind till Ananias came to him to open his eyes, probably designed to intimate to us that before God opens the eyes of men in conversion, he makes them sensibly blind. God brings men to this despair in their own strength in these ways.

1. God oftentimes makes use of men's own experience to convince them that they are helpless in themselves. When they first set out in seeking salvation, it may be they thought it an easy thing to be converted. They thought they should presently bring themselves to repent of their sins, and believe in Christ, and accordingly they strove in their own strength

with hopes of success. But they were disappointed. And so God suffers them to go on striving to open their own eyes, and mend their own hearts. But they find no success. They have been striving to see for a long time, yet they are as blind as ever; and can see nothing. It is all Egyptian darkness. They have been striving to make themselves better; but they are bad as ever. They have often striven to do something which is good, to be in the exercise of good affections, which should be acceptable to God, but they have no success. And it seems to them, that instead of growing better, they grow worse and worse. Their hearts are fuller of wicked thoughts than they were at first. They see no more likelihood of their conversion than there was at first. So God suffers them to strive in their own strength, till they are discouraged, and despair of helping themselves. The prodigal son first strove to fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. But when he despaired of being helped in that way, then he came to himself, and entertained thoughts of returning to his father's house.

2. God sometimes, by a particular assistance of the understanding, enables men to see so much of their own hearts, as at once causes them to despair of helping themselves. He sometimes convinces them by their own trials, suffering them to try a long time to effect their own salvation, until they are discouraged. But God, if he pleases, can convince men without such endeavors of their own, and sometimes he does so, as must be the case in many sudden conversions, of which the instances are not unfrequent. By revealing to them their own hearts, he sometimes enables them to perceive that they are so remote from the exercise of love to God, of faith, and of every other Christian grace, as well as from the possession of the least degree of spiritual light, that they despair of ever bringing themselves to it. They perceive that within their souls all is darkness as darkness itself, and as the shadow of death, and that it is too much for them to cause light. They find themselves dead to anything good, and therefore despair of bringing themselves to the performance of gracious acts. Thus we have shown that it is God's ordinary manner, before he reveals his redeeming mercy to the souls of men, to make them sensible of their sinfulness and danger, of their desert of the divine wrath, and of their utter helplessness in themselves. This we have shown to be most accordant with the Holy Scriptures, as well as with God's method of

dealing with mankind in other things. And we have shown in an imperfect manner how, and by what means, it is that God thus convinces men. This work is what Christ speaks of, as one part of the work of the Holy Ghost, John 16:8, “When he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” It is God’s manner to convince men of sin, before he convinces them of righteousness.

I come now to show the reasons of the doctrine.

The propriety of such a method of proceeding is very obvious. How agreeable to the divine wisdom does it seem that the sinner should be brought to such a conviction of his danger and misery, as to perceive his utter incapacity to help himself by any strength or contrivance of his own, and his entire unworthiness of God’s help, and desert of his wrath. That he should be brought to acknowledge that God, in the exercise of his holy sovereignty, may with perfect justice deal thus with him before he appears in his pardoning mercy and love as his helper and friend. A man who is converted is successively in two exceedingly different states: first, a very miserable, wretched state of condemnation, and then in a blessed condition, a state of justification. How agreeable, therefore, does it seem to the divine wisdom, that such a man should be conscious of this: first, of his miserable, condemned state, and then of his happy state; that, as he is really first guilty, and under a deep desert of hell, before he is really pardoned and admitted to God’s favor, so he should first be conscious that he is guilty, and under such a desert of hell, before he is conscious of being the object of pardoning and redeeming mercy and grace. But the propriety of God’s thus dealing with the souls of men will appear perhaps better by considering the following reasons:

1. It is the will of God that the discoveries of his terrible majesty, and awful holiness and justice, should accompany the discoveries of his grace and love, in order that he may give to his creatures worthy and just apprehensions of himself. It is the glory of God that these attributes are united in the divine nature, that as he is a being of infinite mercy and love and grace, so he is a being of infinite and tremendous majesty, and awful holiness and justice. The perfect and harmonious union of these attributes in the divine nature, is what constitutes the chief part of their glory. God’s awful and terrible attributes, and his mild and gentle

attributes, reflect glory one on the other, and the exercise of the one is in perfect consistency and harmony with that of the other. If there were the exercise of the mild and gentle attributes without the other, [and] if there were love and mercy and grace in inconsistency with God's authority and justice and infinite hatred of sin, it would be no glory. If God's love and grace did not harmonize with his justice and the honor of his majesty, far from being an honor, they would be a dishonor to God. Therefore as God designs to glorify himself when he makes discoveries of the one, he will also make discoveries of the other. When he makes discoveries of his love and grace, it shall appear that they harmonize with those other attributes. Otherwise his true glory would not be discovered. If men were sensible of the love of God without a sense of those other attributes, they would be exposed to have improper and unworthy apprehensions of God, as though he were gracious to sinners in such a manner as did not become a Being of infinite majesty and infinite hatred of sin. And as it would expose to unworthy apprehensions of God, so it would expose the soul in some respects to behave unsuitably towards God. There would not be a due reverence blended with love and joy. Such discoveries of love, without answerable discoveries of awful greatness, would dispose the soul to come with an undue boldness to God. The very nature and design of the gospel show that this is the will of God, that those who have the discoveries of his love, should also have the discoveries of those other attributes. For this was the very end of Christ's laying down his life, and coming into the world, to render the glory of God's authority, holiness, and justice, consistent with his grace in pardoning and justifying sinners, that while God thus manifested his mercy, we might not conceive any unworthy thoughts of him with respect to those other attributes. Seeing, therefore, that this is the very end of Christ's coming into the world, we may conclude that those who are actually redeemed by Christ, and have a true discovery of Christ made to their souls, have a discovery of God's terribleness and justice to prepare them for the discovery of his love and mercy. God, of old, before the death and suffering of Christ were so fully revealed, was ever careful that the discoveries of both should be together, so that men might not apprehend God's mercy in pardoning sin and receiving sinners, to the disparagement of his justice. When God proclaimed his name to Moses, in answer to his desire that he might see God's glory, he indeed proclaimed his mercy: "The Lord, the Lord God,

gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." (Exo. 34:6, 7) But he did not stop here, but also proclaimed his holy justice and vengeance: "and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." (Exo. 34:7) Thus they are joined together again in the fourth commandment. "For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathersupon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Exo. 20:5) Thus we find them joined together in passages too numerous to be mentioned. When God was about to speak to Elijah in Horeb, he was first prepared for such a familiar conversing with God by awful manifestations of the divine majesty. First there was a wind, which rent the rocks, and then an earthquake, and then a devouring fire. 1 Kin. 19:11, 12. God is careful even in heaven, where the discoveries of his love and grace are given in such an exalted degree, also to provide means for a proportional sense of his terribleness, and the dreadfulness of his displeasure, by their beholding it in the miseries and torments of the damned, at the same time that they enjoy his love. Even the man Christ Jesus was first made sensible of the wrath of God, before his exaltation to that transcendent height of enjoyment of the Father's love. And this is one reason that God gives sinners a sense of his wrath against their sins, and of his justice, before he gives them the discoveries of his redeeming love.

2. Unless a man be thus convinced of his sin and misery before God makes him sensible of his redeeming love and mercy, he cannot be sensible of that love and mercy as it is, *viz.* that it is free and sovereign. When God reveals his redeeming grace to men, and makes them truly sensible of it, he would make them sensible of it as it is. God's grace and love towards sinners is in itself very wonderful, as it redeems from dreadful wrath. But mencannot be sensible of this until they perceive in some adequate degree how dreadful the wrath of God is. God's redeeming grace and love in Christ is free and sovereign, as it is altogether without any worthiness in those who are the objects of it. But men cannot be sensible of this, until they are sensible of their own unworthiness. The grace of God in Christ is glorious and wonderful, as it is not only as the

objects of it are without worthiness, but as they deserve the everlasting wrath and displeasure of God. But they cannot be sensible of this until they are made sensible that they deserve God's eternal wrath. The grace of God in Christ is wonderful, as it saves and redeems from so many and so great sins, and from the punishment they have deserved. But sinners cannot be sensible of this till they are in some measure sensible of their sinfulness, and brought to reflect upon the sins of their lives, and to see the wickedness of their hearts. It is the glory of God's grace in Christ, that it is so free and sovereign. And doubtless it is the will of God, that when he reveals his grace to the soul, it should be seen in its proper glory, though not perfectly. When men see the glory of God's grace aright, they see it as free and unmerited, and contrary to the demerit of their sins. All who have a spiritual understanding of the grace of God in Christ, have a perception of the glory of that grace. But the glory of the divine grace appears chiefly in its being bestowed on the sinner when he is in a condition so exceedingly miserable and necessitous. In order, therefore, that the sinner may be sensible of this glory, he must first be sensible of the greatness of his misery, and then of the greatness of the divine mercy. The heart of man is not prepared to receive the mercy of God in Christ, as free and unmerited, till he is sensible of his own demerit. Indeed the soul is not capable of receiving a revelation or discovery of the redeeming grace of God in Christ, as redeeming grace, without being convinced of sin and misery. He must see his sin and misery before he can see the grace of God in redeeming him from that sin and misery.

3. Until the sinner is convinced of his sin and misery, he is not prepared to receive the redeeming mercy and grace of God, as through a Mediator, because he does not see his need of a Mediator till he sees his sin and misery. If there were, on the part of God, any exercise of absolute and immediate mercy towards sinners bestowed without any satisfaction or purchase, the soul might possibly see that without a conviction of its sin and misery. But there is not. All God's mercy to sinners is through a Savior. The redeeming mercy and grace of God is mercy and grace in Christ. And when God discovers his mercy to the soul, he will discover it as mercy in a Savior; and it is his will that the mercy should be received as in and through a Savior, with a full consciousness of its being through his righteousness and satisfaction. It is the will of God, that as all the

spiritual comforts which his people receive are in and through Christ, so they should be sensible that they receive them through Christ, and that they can receive them in no other way. It is the will of God that his people should have their eyes directed to Christ, and should depend upon him for mercy and favor, [so] that whenever they receive comforts through his purchase, they should receive them as from him. And that because God would glorify his Son as Mediator, as the glory of man's salvation belongs to Christ, so it is the will of God that all the people of Christ, all who are saved by him, should receive their salvation as of him, and should attribute the glory of it to him. None who will not give the glory of salvation to Christ, should have the benefit of it. Upon this account God insists upon it, and it is absolutely necessary, that a sinner's conviction of his sin, and misery, and helplessness in himself, should precede or accompany the revelation of the redeeming love and grace of God. I shall also mention two other ends which are hereby attained.

4. By this means the redeeming mercy and love of God are more highly prized and rejoiced in, when discovered. By the previous discoveries of danger, misery, and helplessness, and desert of wrath, the heart is prepared to embrace a discovery of mercy. When the soul stands trembling at the brink of the pit, and despairs of any help from itself, it is prepared joyfully to receive tidings of deliverance. If God is pleased at such a time to make the soul hear his still small voice, his call to himself and to a Savior, the soul is prepared to give it a joyful reception. The gospel then, if it be heard spiritually, will be glad tidings indeed, the most joyful which the sinner ever heard. The love of God and of Christ to the world, and to him in particular, will be admired, and Christ will be most precious. To remember what danger he was in, what seas surrounded him, and then to reflect how safe be now is in Christ, and how sufficient Christ is to defend him and to answer all his wants, will cause the greater exultation of soul. God, in this method of dealing with the souls of his elect, consults their happiness, as well as his own glory. And it increases happiness, to be made sensible of their misery and unworthiness, before God comforts them. For their comfort, when they receive it, is so much the sweeter.

5. The heart is more prepared and disposed to praise God for it. This

follows from the reasons already mentioned: As they are hereby made sensible how free and sovereign the mercy of God is towards them and how great his grace in saving them, and as they more highly prize the mercy and love of God made known to them, all will dispose them to magnify the name of God, to exalt the love of God the Father in giving his Son to them, and to exalt Jesus Christ by their praise, who laid down his life for them to redeem them from all iniquity. They are ready to say, "How miserable should I have been, had not God had pity upon me, and provided me a Savior! In what a miserable condition should I have been, had not Christ loved me, and given himself for me! I must have endured that dreadful wrath of God; I must have suffered the punishment which I had deserved by all that great sin and wickedness of which I have been guilty."

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The Warnings of Scripture are in the Best Manner Adapted to the Awakening and Conversion of Sinners

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." -- **Luke 16:31**

We here have an account how the rich man in hell — after he had in vain begged of Abraham to send Lazarus to his relief-prays that Lazarus may be sent to his brethren to warn them, that they might take care for their salvation, and escape that place of torment. By the way, it may be proper to remark, that we cannot from this conclude, that the damned will have any workings of natural affection to their near relations in this world, or any concern for their salvation. The design of Christ was only parabolically to represent what different thoughts worldly and wicked men will have of things, when in hell, from what they have while on earth. The rich man, when he was upon earth, only minded his honor, ease, and

pleasure, and did not think it worth while to take care of his soul, and to be at much pains to escape hell. But now he is of another mind, and is sensible that if his five brethren, who live in the same careless neglect of their souls as he did, knew what hell is, they would take more care.

But this seems to be put into the parable chiefly to introduce what follows, the reply which Abraham made to him, *They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them*. As much as to say, they have already abundant warning and instruction, which God himself hath provided for them, let them make use of that.

The rich man replies, *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent*. Then come in the words of the text, *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*. By Moses and the prophets is meant the whole Old Testament, which was the whole canon of Scripture which they had in those times. The hearing of them implies, attending to what they say, believing them, and obeying them — *they would not be persuaded* — that is, they would not be persuaded to take thorough care of their souls, to forsake their sins and turn to God, so as to avoid this place of torment — *though one rose from the dead*; though one should go from the invisible world, either from heaven, where they see the torments of the damned, or from hell, where they feel them.

DOCTRINE

The warnings of God's Word are more fitted to obtain the ends of awakening sinners, and bringing them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

In this passage, Moses and the prophets seem not only to be equalized to the warnings of one from the invisible world, but to be preferred before them. They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. They have already those means which God in his infinite wisdom hath seen to be fittest for them, and more suitable to their nature and circumstances, than the rising of one from the dead. — But whether there can be any

more than an equality necessarily inferred or not; yet if only the warnings of the Old Testament have an equal tendency to bring men to repentance, as the rising of one from the dead; then surely these, together with the much clearer revelation under the gospel-dispensation by Christ and his apostles — wherein we are abundantly more plainly told of another world, and wherein life and immortality are brought to light — must have a much greater tendency and fitness to obtain these ends.

Sinners are apt to find fault with the means of grace which they enjoy, and to say with themselves, If I had ever seen hell, or had ever heard the cries of the damned, or had ever seen a person who had felt hell-torments, or had seen them at a distance, that would awaken me; then I would for sake all my sins, and would do whatever I could to escape hell. But now I am only told of hell in the Bible and by ministers; and there never was any in this world that saw or felt it: so that I am ready to think it is mere delusion and fancy. How do I know that there is any hell? How do I know but that when I die there will be an end of me?

But it is the indisposition of sinners to this great work, to which they are directed, which makes them find fault with their means and advantages. The slothful and negligent, who hate to bestir themselves, are they who object. “The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns.” — Sinners know not what they would have. They are fixedly averse to breaking off their sins by righteousness. And to make the matter the more excusable, they object against the sufficiency of their means, and so they will not believe, except they see hell, or see some person who has seen it.

But God, who knows our nature and circumstances, knows what is most adapted to them. He who made the faculties of our souls, knows what will have the greatest tendency to move them, and to work upon them. He who is striving with us, to bring us to repentance and salvation, uses the fittest and best means. In contriving and appointing the means of our salvation, he chooses better for us than we should for ourselves.

Suppose a person should rise from the dead to warn sinners, either from heaven, where they see the misery of the damned, or from hell, where they feel it; and should tell how dismal those torments are, having seen or felt them; and suppose he should confirm what he said, by declaring that

he had seen the smoke of their torments, the raging of the flames, the dreadful crew of devils and damned souls together, and had heard their dismal cries and shrieks; or suppose he should say that he had felt them, and should express by words and actions the doleful state of the damned and the extremity of their torments; this would probably greatly fright and terrify many sinners who were not terrified by reading the Bible, nor by hearing preaching about hell-torments. But it would be very much because of the unusualness and strangeness of the thing. Men are apt to be much affected with strange things, and to be much affrighted by specters in the dark, because they are unusual. But if they were as common as preaching is, they would lose their effect.

It might be that on such an unusual occasion, as the rising of one from the dead, for a while men would reform their lives, and possibly some might be so affected as never to forget it. But we are to consider which would have the greatest tendency to awaken us, if both were alike new and unusual, to be warned of the misery of hell by the great God himself, declaring as it were from heaven how dreadful hell is, and abundantly warning us about it; or to be warned only by a man coming from the invisible world, who had either seen or felt these miseries. It is in this view that we shall consider the matter; and we shall show what advantages the former mode of warning has above the latter; or how the warnings of God's Word have a greater tendency to awaken sinners and bring them to repentance, than the rising of one from the dead to warn them.

I. God, in many respects, knows better what belongs to the punishment of sinners than departed souls. Departed souls doubtless know what hell-torments are, much better than any on earth. The souls of the wicked feel them, and the souls of the saints see them afar off. God glorifies his justice in the punishment of ungodly men, in the view of the saints and angels, and thereby makes them the more admire the riches of his goodness in choosing them to like. As the rich man saw Lazarus in heaven afar off, so Lazarus saw the rich man in hell. He saw hell-torments. And therefore the rich man desires he may be sent to warn his brethren. — And if one should rise from the dead to warn wicked men, if it would at all awaken them, it would be because he knew what hell-torments were

by his own knowledge, and could describe them to others, as having seen and felt them.

But surely the all-seeing God knows as well as any of the dead, what the present sufferings of the damned are. He is everywhere present with his all-seeing eye. He is in heaven and in hell, and in and through every part of the creation.. He is where every devil is; and where every damned soul is, he is present by his knowledge and his essence. He not only knows as well as those in heaven, who see at a distance; but he knows as perfectly as those who feel the misery. He seeth into the innermost recesses of the hearts of those miserable spirits. He seeth all the sorrow and anguish that are there; for he upholds them in being. They and all the powers of their spirits, whereby they are capable of either happiness or misery, are in his hands.

Besides, it is his wrath they endure. He measures out to them their several portions of punishment. He makes his wrath enter into them. He is a consuming fire to them. His anger is that fire, in which they are tormented. He therefore is doubtless able to give us as clear and distinct, and as true, an account of hell, as the damned themselves, if they should rise from the dead. He needs not any to inform him.

He knows far better what the eternity of these torments is than any of them, He can better tell us how awful a thing eternity is. He knows better what the future judgment of sinners will be, when the Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel. He knows far better than they how much the torment of the wicked will then be increased.

II. We have the truth upon surer grounds from God's testimony than we could have it from the testimony of one rising from the dead. Suppose one should rise from the dead, and tell us of the dreadfulness of hell-torments. How precarious a foundation would that be to build upon, in a matter of such importance, unless we consider it as confirmed by divine testimony. We should be uncertain whether there were not some delusion in the case. We know that it is impossible for God to lie. And we may know that the matter is just as he declares it to us. But if one should come from the dead, we could not be so sure that we were no way imposed

upon. We could not be so sure that he who testified was not himself subject to some delusion. We could not be sure that the matter was not strained too high, and represented greater than it really is.

One coming from the dead could not, merely by force of his own testimony, make us sure that we should come to that place of torments if we did not repent and reform. And if there should come more witnesses than one from the dead, if there should be ever so many, yet there is no authority equal to that of God. There is no testimony of spirits from the invisible world which would be so indisputable and unquestionable as the divine testimony. How could we know, unless by some divine revelation, that they who should come from the dead had not come to deceive us. How could we know how wicked, or how good they were, and upon what views they acted?

Whereas we have the greatest ground to be assured, that the First Being, and the Fountain of all being and perfection, is nothing but light and truth itself, and therefore that it is impossible he should deceive or be deceived.

III. The warnings of God's Word have greatly the advantage, by reason of the greatness and majesty of him who speaks. The speeches and declarations of those who are great, excellent, and honorable, have a greater tendency to move the affections, than the declarations of others who are less excellent. Things spoken by a king affect more than the same things spoken by a mean man.

But God is infinitely greater than kings; he is universal King of heaven and earth, the absolute Sovereign of all things. Now, what can have a greater tendency to strike the mind and move the heart, than to be warned by this great and glorious Being? Shall we be unmoved when he speaks who made heaven and earth by the word of his power? If his immediate speeches, declarations, and warning, will not influence us, what will? Isa. 1:2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken." — That is to the present purpose which we have in Mat. 21:37, "But last of all he sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son."

He sent his servants before, but they did not regard them. He therefore, sent his son, who was a much greater and more honorable messenger, and said Surely they will regard him.

What if God should send messengers from the dead to warn us, even many in succession, and men should reject them. We should justly argue, that it would have a much greater tendency to make men regard and obey the counsel, if he would send his Son, or come himself. But God has sent his Son, and therein he hath come himself. He came down from heaven, and took upon him our nature, and dwelt among us, teaching and warning us concerning hell and damnation.

In the Bible, we not only have those warnings which were given by inspiration of the prophets, but we have God's own words, which he spake as it were by his own mouth. In the Old Testament is his voice out of the midst of the fire and the darkness, from mount Sinai; and the New Testament, we have God speaking to us, as dwelling among us. He came down from heaven, and instructed us in a familiar manner for a long while. And we have his instructions recorded in our Bibles. — Now, which has the greatest tendency to influence men, to have one of the departed spirits sent back into its body to warn them, or to have God himself assume a body and warn them?

IV. It more evidently shows the importance of the affair, that God should immediately concern himself in it, than the coming of one from the dead would do. Those things about which kings most immediately concern themselves are commonly matters of the greatest importance, while they leave less concernments to be managed by their officers. And surely that must be a matter of very great moment, in which God shows himself so much concerned as he does in our salvation. God, in all ages of the world, hath showed himself very much concerned in this matter. How abundantly hath he warned us in his holy word? How earnest hath he shown himself in it! How many arguments and expostulations hath he used, that we might avoid the way to hell!-This evidently argues, that what we are warned about is a matter of the utmost concern, and proves it much more than if we were only warned by one risen from the dead.

V. God warning us of our danger of damnation hath a greater tendency to have influence upon us, because he is our Judge. Damnation is a punishment to which he condemns and which he inflicts. What he warns us of is his own wrath and vengeance. In his word we have his threatenings against sin denounced by himself. He tells us, that if we go on in sin, he will destroy us, and cast us out of his sight, and pour out his wrath upon us, and hold us eternally under misery. He tells us so himself; and this hath a much greater tendency to influence us, than to be told so by another, who is not to be our judge, who hath not in his hands the power of making us miserable. — When a king immediately threatens his own displeasure, it has a greater tendency to terrify men, than when another man threatens it, or warns them of the danger.

VI. God is infinitely wise, and knows better how to speak to us so as to persuade us, than one risen from the dead. He perfectly knows our nature and state, and knows how to adapt his instructions and warnings to our frame and circumstances in the world. And without doubt that method which God has chosen, is agreeable to his infinite wisdom, and most adapted to our nature.

If one should come from hell to warn sinners, it may be he would tell them of hell in such a manner as would have more of a tendency to drive men into despair, and set them a blaspheming as they do in hell, than to excite them to strive for salvation, and diligently to use the means which God hath appointed. But God knoweth what revelation of hell we can bear, and what hath the most tendency to do us good in this our infirm, dark, and sinful state. — The declarations of one come from hell might more tend to drive us from God than to bring us near to him. It is best for us to be warned and instructed by God, who knows best how to do it.

These are some of the reasons why the warnings of God's Word have more of a tendency to bring us to repentance, than the warning of one risen from the dead.

APPLICATION

I. It is a natural inference from this doctrine, that if these means which God hath appointed do not answer to lead men to repentance and reformation, no others would. — Although this be not an absolutely necessary consequence from the words of the doctrine; yet it seems to be Christ's aim to teach us, that if God's means will not answer, none will. Our own means, those which we can devise, however they may seem more likely at a distance to be effectual, if brought to the trial, will not prove to be better. The rich man thought that if his brethren were warned by one rising from the dead, they would surely repent. But Abraham tells him, he is mistaken.

If one rising from the dead would not answer the purpose, we may rationally conclude that no other kind of means, different from those appointed by God, would. For what can we think of, which seems to have more tendency to awaken men, and lead to repentance, than one coming from the dead to them; except those means which we enjoy. — Indeed men can think of many means, which they may imagine, if they enjoyed them, would make them believe and repent. But they deceive themselves.

It may be they think, if they could see some prophet, and see him work miracles, that this would awaken them. But how was it then when there were prophets? There has rarely been a more degenerate time than that of Elijah and Elisha, who wrought so many miracles. The people did not regard their prophecies nor their miracles; but walked in their own ways, and served their own gods, so that Elijah thought there was none left of the true worshippers of God. And how did they treat the prophet Jeremiah, solemnly warning them from God of their approaching destruction? And how often do the prophets complain that all their prophecies and warnings were neglected and despised!

Would it be sufficient if you could hear God speak from heaven? How was it in Moses's time, when they heard God speak out of the midst of the fire, and heard the voice of words exceeding loud and full of majesty, so that they exceedingly trembled; when they saw mount Sinai all covered with smoke, and shaking exceedingly? How did they behave themselves? Did they all turn from their sins, and after that walk in the ways of God? It is true, they were very much affected at first, while it was a new and strange thing to them; but how hard-hearted and rebellious were they soon after!

They did not scruple to rebel against this same great and glorious God. Yea, they made a golden calf while Moses was in the mount conversing with God, just after they had seen those dreadful appearances of divine majesty.

Thus they rebelled against the Lord, although they had seen so many miracles and wonders in Egypt at the Red sea, and in the wilderness; although they continually saw the pillar of cloud and of fire going before them, were continually fed in a miraculous manner with manna, and in the same miraculous manner made to drink water out of the rock.

Men are apt to think, that if they had lived in Christ's time, and had seen and heard him, and had seen his miracles, that they would have effectually convinced and turned them from sin. But how was it in fact? How few were there brought to repentance by all his discourses and miracles! How hard-hearted were they! Some were very much affected for a little while; but how few constant steady followers had he! He was, notwithstanding his miracles, rejected, despised, and even murdered by the people among whom he dwelt. And they were men of the same natures as sinners in these days.

The Scripture is full of instances, sufficient to convince us, that if the Word of God will not awaken and convert sinners, nothing will. — And we see enough in these days to convince us of it. Men sometimes meet with those things by which we should not imagine, if we did not see it, and were not used to it, but that they would be thoroughly awakened and reformed. — They sometimes hear the warnings of dying men expecting to go to hell. One would think this would be enough to awaken them; and it may be they are affected with it for the present. But it only touches them. It vanishes away, and is gone like a puff of wind.

Sometimes sinners themselves are laid upon beds of sickness, and their lives hang in doubt before them. They are brought to the sides of the grave, and to the very mouth of hell, and their hearts are full of terror and amazement. Yet if they recover, they soon forget it, and return to the ways of folly and wickedness. — Sometimes this is repeated; they are taken sick again, are again in extreme peril of death, their hearts are full of amazement, and they make many promises and vows; yet being

recovered, they again soon forget all, and return to sin and folly. Such things are enough to convince us, that if the Word of God be not sufficient to convince men, and make them break off their sins, no external means would be sufficient.

Perhaps some may yet be ready to think, that if sinners should see hell, and here the cries of the damned, that would be effectual, though nothing else would. But if we duly consider the matter, we shall see reason to think, that it would not have so great a tendency to turn men from sin, as the Word of God. Such a thing would doubtless be effectual to terrify and affright men, and probably to death.. Such a mean is not at all suitable to our nature and state in the world. If it should not fright men to death, it would not have so great a tendency to them to make them diligently use means for their salvation as the warnings of Scripture. It would probably drive them to despair; or so take away their spirits that they would have no heart to seek God. Instead of driving them to God, it would probably make them hate him more. It would make them more like devils; and set them a blaspheming as the damned do. For while the hearts of men are filled with natural darkness, they cannot see the glory of the divine justice appearing in such extreme torments.

Therefore, the means which God hath instituted for us, are doubtless the best, and most conducive to lead men to repentance and salvation. They are doubtless far better than any other which we can devise.

II. Hence we learn the dreadful hardness of men's hearts, since the Word of God hath no more influence upon them, and they are no more moved and wrought upon by those means which infinite wisdom hath provided. The warnings of the Word of God are, as you have heard, better and more powerful means than if one should rise form the dead to warn us, and tell us our danger, and the dreadfulness of the wrath of God. You have also heard, that if these means will not answer the end of awakening and leading sinners to repentance, no other will; neither the working of miracles, nor the hearing of God speak with an audible voice from heaven, nor anything else. — Yet how few are there who are effectually wrought upon by the Word of God! They are very thinly sown; there is but

here and there one.

When we read how the children of Israel conducted themselves in the wilderness, how often they murmured and offended; we are ready to wonder at the hardness of their hearts. And when we read the history of Christ, and how the Jews hated and rejected him notwithstanding his many miracles; we are ready to wonder how they could be so hard-hearted. But we have as much reason to wonder at ourselves, for we have naturally the same sort of hearts that they had. And sinners in these days manifest a hardness of heart as much to be wondered at, in that they are not influenced by the Word of God. For they who will not hear Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, neither would be persuaded, if one should rise from the dead, or if an angel should come from heaven.

The best means of awakening and conversion are plentifully enjoyed by us, much more plentifully in several respects, than they were by those who had only Moses and the prophets. In the first place, we have divine truth more fully revealed in the Bible than they had then. Light now shines abundantly clear. Gospel-truth is revealed, not in types and shadows, but plainly. Heaven and hell are much more clearly and expressly made known. We are told, that the glory of that revelation was no glory in comparison with the revelation of the gospel.

Again, we have a greater plenty of Bibles than they had under the dispensation of Moses and the prophets. Then there was no such thing as printing, and Bibles were scarce things. They seldom had any Bibles anywhere else but in their synagogues. But now we have them in our houses; we can look into them when we please. Besides Christ hath appointed the gospel-ministry, by which we have the Word of God explained and enforced every week. Yet how little influence hath the Word of God to bring men to repentance!

Let this strike conviction into those who never yet have found any such effect by the Word of God. Though you are convinced of nothing else, yet you have abundant reason to be convinced that your hearts are as hard as a stone, and that you are exceedingly stupid and sottish.

III. Hence we may learn how justly and fairly God deals with us. He gives

us the best means of awakening and reclaiming us from our sins; better than if he had sent one from the dead to warn us. He gives us those means which are most suited to our nature and circumstances. He gives sinners abundant warning before he punishes them. What could he have done more than he hath done? We can devise or imagine no sort of warning which would have been better than what God hath given us. How justly therefore are ungodly men punished! How inexcusable will they be!

IV. Let all make use of the means which God hath instituted. They are the best and only means by which we may expect to obtain salvation. We shall be most inexcusable therefore if we neglect them. Let us attend to the Word of God, read and hear it carefully, consider it thoroughly, and daily walk by it. Let us be diligent in this work. The Word of God is a great price put into our hands to get wisdom and eternal salvation. Let us therefore improve it while we have it, as we know not how soon we may be deprived of it; lest Christ say to us, as in Luke 19:42, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes”

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The Wisdom of God, Displayed in the Way of Salvation

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." -- **Ephesians 3:10**

Subject: The wisdom appearing in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ is far above the wisdom of the angels.

The apostle is speaking in the context of the glorious doctrine of the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; and how it was in a great measure kept hid in the past ages of the world. It was a mystery that before they did not understand, but now it was in a glorious manner brought to light (verse 3-5). — "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets, by the spirit." And (verse 8, 9) "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

And the apostle in the text informs us that what Christ had accomplished towards his church, the work of redemption, had not only in a great measure unveiled the mystery to the church in this world, but God had more clearly and fully opened it to the understanding even of the angels themselves, and that this was one end of God in it, to discover the glory of his wisdom to the angels. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

One end of revealing God's counsels concerning the work of redemption, is making known God's wisdom. It is called *manifold* wisdom because of the manifold glorious ends that are attained by it. The excellent designs,

hereby accomplished, are very manifold. The wisdom of God in this is of vast extent. The contrivance is so manifold that one may spend an eternity in discovering more of the excellent ends and designs accomplished by it, and the multitude and vast variety of things that are, by divine contrivance, brought to conspire to the bringing about those ends.

We may observe to whom it is that God would manifest this his wisdom, by revealing the mystery of our redemption; — and they are not only men, but the *angels*. "To the intent that now unto the *principalities* and *powers in heavenly places* might be known — the manifold wisdom of God." The angels are often called principalities and powers because of the exalted dignity of their nature. The angels excel in strength and wisdom. Those who are the *wise men* of the earth are called princes in the style of the apostle. 1 Cor. 2:6, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world" — verse 8, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." So the angels are called principalities for their great wisdom. They may also be so called for the honor God has put upon them, in employing them as his ministers and instruments, wherewith he governs the world, and therefore are called thrones, dominions, and principalities, and powers, Col. 1:16.

They are called principalities and powers in heavenly places, as distinguishing them from those that are in places of earthy power and dignity. The offices or places of dignity and power that the angels sustain, are not earthly, but *heavenly*. They are places of honor and power in the *heavenly city* and the *heavenly kingdom*.

One end of God in revealing his design or contrivance for redemption, as he has so fully and gloriously done by Jesus Christ, is that the angels in heaven may behold the glory of his wisdom by it. Though they are such bright intelligencies, and do always behold the face of God the Father, and know so much; yet here is matter of instruction for them. Here they may see more of the diving wisdom than ever they had seen before. It was a new discovery of the wisdom of God to them.

The *time* when this display of the wisdom of God was especially made to

the angels is when Christ introduced the gospel-dispensation, implied in those words, "To the intent that *now* unto the principalities," etc. When Christ came into the world and died, and actually performed the work of redemption — when he had fully and plainly revealed the counsels of God concerning it; and accordingly introduced the evangelical dispensation, and erected the gospel-church — then the angels understood more of the mystery of man's redemption, and the manifold designs and counsels of divine wisdom, then ever they had done before.

In the foregoing verse the apostle, after speaking of revealing this wisdom of God to man, "And to make all *men* see, what is the fellowship of this mystery," etc. speaks of this mystery as a thing from the beginning kept hid till now, "The mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God — that now," etc. In this verse he mentions another end, *viz.* that he may, at the same time, make the angels also see God's wisdom in his glorious scheme of redemption. — "Now at this time," implies that it was before a mystery kept hid from them in comparison of what it is now. And here is room enough for the angels to discover more and more to all eternity of the wisdom of God in this work.

Observe the *medium* by which the angels come by this knowledge, *viz.* the church — "That now unto principalities — might be known by the church," — *i.e.* by the things they see done *in* the church, or *towards* the church. and by what they see *concerning* the church. So has it pleased the sovereign God, that the angels should have the most glorious discoveries of divine wisdom by his doings towards his church, a sort of beings much inferior to themselves. It has pleased God to put this honor upon us.

The wisdom appearing in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ is far above the wisdom of the angels. For here it is mentioned as one end of God in revealing the contrivance of our salvation, that the angels thereby might see and know how great and manifold the wisdom of God is, to hold forth the divine wisdom to the angels' view and admiration. But why is it so, if this wisdom be not higher than their own wisdom? It never would have been mentioned as one end of revealing the contrivance of redemption, that the angels might see how manifold God's wisdom is, if all the wisdom to be seen in it was no greater than their own. It is mentioned as a wisdom such as they had never seen before, not in God,

much less in themselves. That *now* might be known how manifold the wisdom of God is, now, four thousand years since the creation. — In all that time the angels had always beheld the face of God, and had been studying God's works of creation. Yet they never, till that day, had seen anything like that; never knew how manifold God's wisdom is, as now they knew it by the church.

SECTION I

Wonderful things done, by which salvation is procured.

SUCH is the choice of the person chosen to be our redeemer, — the substituting of him in our room, — his incarnation — his life — his death — and exaltation. And,

I. We will consider the *choice of the person* to be our redeemer. When God designed the redemption of mankind, his great wisdom appears in that he pitched upon his own, his only-begotten, Son, to be the person to perform the work. He was a redeemer of God's own choosing, and therefore he is called in Scripture, God's *elect* (Isa. 42:1). The wisdom of choosing this person to be the redeemer, appears in his being every way a *fit* person for this undertaking. It was necessary that the person that is the redeemer should be a *divine* person. — None but a *divine* person was sufficient for this great work. The work is infinitely unequal to any creature. It was requisite that the redeemer of sinners should be himself infinitely *holy*. None could take away the infinite evil of sin, but one that infinitely far from and contrary to sin himself. Christ is a fit person upon this account.

It was requisite that the person, in order to be sufficient for this undertaking, should be one of infinite *dignity* and worthiness, that he might be capable of meriting infinite blessings. The Son of God is a fit person on this account. It was necessary, that he should be a person of infinite *power* and *wisdom*. For this work is so difficult that it requires such an one. Christ is a fit person also upon this account. It was requisite that he should be a person infinitely *dear* to God the father, in order to

give an infinite value to his transactions in the Father's esteem, and that the Father's love to him might balance the offense and provocation by our sins. Christ is a fit person upon this account. Therefore called *the beloved* (Eph. 1:6), He has made us accepted in the *beloved*.

It was requisite, that the person should be one that could act in this as of *his own absolute right:* one that, in himself, is not a servant or subject. Because, if he is one that cannot act of his own right, he cannot merit anything. He that is a servant, and that can do no more than he is bound to do, cannot merit. And then he that has nothing that is absolutely his own, cannot pay any price to redeem another. Upon this account Christ is a fit person. And none but a divine person can be fit. — And he must be a person also of infinite *mercy* and *love*. For no other person but such an one would undertake a work so difficult, for a creature so unworthy as man. Upon this account also Christ is a fit person. — It was requisite that he should be a person of unchangeable perfect *truth* and faithfulness. Otherwise he would not be fit to be depended on by us in so great an affair. Christ is also a fit person upon this account.

The wisdom of God in choosing his eternal Son, appears, not only in that he is a fit person; but in that he was the *only* fit person of all persons, whether created or uncreated. No *created* person, neither man nor angel, was fit for this undertaking. For we have just now shown that he must be a person of *infinite* holiness — dignity — power — wisdom, infinitely dear to God — of infinite love and mercy; and one that may act of his own absolute right. But no creature, how excellent soever, has any one of these qualifications. — There are three *uncreated* persons of the Trinity, The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And Christ alone of these was a suitable person for a redeemer. It was not meet, that the redeemer should be God the Father. Because he, in the divine economy of the persons of the Trinity, was the person that holds the rights of the God-head, and so was the person offended, whose justice required satisfaction; and was to be appeased by a mediator. It was not meet it should be the *Holy Ghost,* for in being mediator between the Father and the saints, he is in some sense so between the Father and the Spirit. The saints, in all their spiritual transactions with God, act by the Spirit; or rather, it is the Spirit of God that acts in them. They are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit

dwelling in them is their principle of action, in all their transactings with God. But in these spiritual transactings with God, they act by a *mediator*. These spiritual and holy exercises cannot be acceptable, or avail anything with God, as from a fallen creature, but by a mediator. Therefore Christ, in being mediator between the Father and the saints, may be said to be mediator between the Father and the Holy Spirit, that acts in the saints. And therefore it was meet, that the mediator should not be either the Father or the Spirit, but a middle person between them both. It is the Spirit in the saints, that seeks the blessing of God, by faith and prayer, and, as the apostle says, with groanings that cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26) "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered." The Spirit in the saints seeks divine blessings of God by and through a mediator. And therefore that mediator must not be the Spirit, but another person.

It shows a divine wisdom, to *know* that he was a fit person. No other but one of *divine* wisdom could have known it. None but one of infinite wisdom could have thought of him to be a redeemer of sinners. For he, as he is God, is one of the persons offended by sin, against whom man by his sin had rebelled. Who but God infinitely wise could ever have thought of *him* to be a redeemer of sinners; against whom they had sinned, to whom they were enemies, and of whom they deserved infinitely ill? Who would ever have thought of him as one that should set his heart upon man, and exercise infinite love and pity to him and exhibit infinite wisdom, power, and merit in redeeming him? We proceed,

II. To consider the *substituting* of this person in our room. After choosing the person to be our redeemer, the next step of divine wisdom is, to contrive the way how he should perform this work. If God had declared who the person was that should do this work and had gone no further, no creature could have thought which way this person could have performed the work. If God had told them that his own Son must be the redeemer, and that he alone was a fit person for the work, and that he was a person every way fit and sufficient for it, — but had proposed to *them* to contrive a way how this fit and sufficient person should proceed, — we may well suppose that all created understandings would have been utterly at a loss.

The first thing necessary to be done is that this Son of God should become our representative and surety. And so be substituted in the sinner's room. But who of created intelligences would have thought of any such thing as the eternal and infinitely beloved Son of God being substituted in the room of sinners? his standing in stead of a sinner, a rebel, an object of the wrath of God? Who would have thought of a person of infinite glory representing sinful worms, that had made themselves by sin infinitely provoking and abominable?

For if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's room, then his sin must be charged upon him. He will thereby take the guilt of the sinner upon himself. He must be subject to the same law that man was, both as to the commands, and threatenings. But who would have thought of any such thing concerning the Son of God? But we proceed,

III. To consider the *incarnation* Of Jesus Christ. The next step of divine wisdom in contriving how Christ should perform the work of redeeming sinners, was in determining his incarnation. Suppose God had revealed his counsels thus far to created understandings, that his own Son was the person chosen for this work, that he had substituted him in the sinner's obligations and guilt on himself — and had revealed no more, but had left the rest to them to find out. It is no way probable that even then they could ever have thought of a way, whereby this person might actually have performed the work of redemption. For if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then he takes the sinners' obligations on himself. For instance, he must take the obligation the sinner is under to perform *perfect obedience* to the divine law. But it is not probable, that any creature could have conceived how that could be possible. — How should a person who is the eternal JEHOVAH, become a servant, be under law, and perform obedience even to the law of man?

And again, if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then he comes under the sinner's obligation to suffer the punishment which man's sin had deserved. And who could have thought that to be possible? For how should a divine person, who is essentially, unchangeably, and infinitely happy, suffer pain and torment? And how should he who is the object of God's infinitely dear love, suffer the wrath of his Father? It is not to be supposed, that created wisdom ever would have found out a way

how to have got over these difficulties. But divine wisdom has found out a way, *viz.* by the incarnation of the Son of God. That the Word should be made flesh, that he might be both God and man, in one person. What created understanding could have conceived that such a thing was possible? Yet these things could never be *proved* to be *impossible*. This distinction duly considered will show the futility of many Socinian objections.

And if God had revealed to them that it was possible and even that it should be, but left them to find out *how* it should be, we may well suppose that they would all have been puzzled and confounded to conceive of a way for so uniting a man to the eternal Son of God, that they should be but one person, that one who is truly a man in all respects, should indeed be the very same Son of God that was with God from all eternity. This is a great mystery to us. Hereby, a person that is infinite, omnipotent, and unchangeable, is become, in a sense, a finite, a feeble man, a man subject to our sinless infirmities, passions, and calamities! The great God, the sovereign of heaven and earth, is thus become a worm of the dust. (Psa. 22:6) "I am a worm, and no man." He that is eternal and self-existent, and all-sufficient, now is come to stand in need of food and clothing. He becomes poor, "has not where to lay his head; — stands in need of the charity of men, and is maintained by it! It is far above us, to conceive how it is done. It is a great wonder and mystery to us. But it was no mystery to divine wisdom.

IV. The next thing to be considered is the life of Christ in this world. The wisdom of God appears in the circumstances of his life — and in the work and business of his life.

First, the *circumstances* of his life. If God had revealed that his own Son should be incarnate, and should live in this world in the human nature, and it had been left to men to determine what circumstances of life would have been most suitable for him, human wisdom would have determined, that he should appear in the world in a most magnificent manner, with very extraordinary outward ensigns of honor, authority, and power, far above any of the kings of the earth. That here he should reign in great visible pomp and splendor over all nations. — And thus it was that men's wisdom *did* determine, before Christ came. The wise, the great men

among the Jews, scribes and Pharisees, who are called “Princes of this world,” *did* expect the Messiah would thus appear. But the wisdom of God chose quite otherwise. It chose that when the Son of God became man, he should begin his life in a stable, for many years dwell obscurely in a family of low degree in the world, and be in low outward circumstances, that he should be poor, and not have where to lay his head, that he should be maintained by the charity of some of his disciples, that he should “Grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground,” (Isa. 53:2). “That he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets,” (Isa. 42:2). That he should come to Zion in a lowly manner, “riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” — “That he should be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

And now the divine determination in this matter is made known, we may safely conclude that it is far the most suitable, and that it would not have been at all suitable for God, when he was manifest in flesh, to appear with earthly pomp, wealth, and grandeur. No! these things are infinitely too mean and despicable for the Son of God to show as if he affected or esteemed them. Men, if they had this way proposed to them, would have been ready to condemn it, as foolish and very unsuitable for the Son of God. “But the foolishness of God is wiser than men,” (1 Cor. 1:25). “And God hath brought to nought the wisdom of this world, and the princes of this world,” (1 Cor. 2:6). Christ, by thus appearing in mean and low outward circumstances in the world, has poured contempt upon all worldly wealth and glory, and has taught us to despise it. And if it becomes mean men to despise them, how much more did it become the Son of God! And then Christ hereby has taught us to be lowly in heart. If he who was infinitely high and great, was thus lowly, how lowly should we be, who are indeed so vile!

Second, the wisdom of God appears in the *work* and business of the life of Christ. Particularly , that he should perfectly obey the law of God, under such great temptations, that he should have conflicts with, and overcome, for us, in a way of obedience, the powers of earth and hell, that he should be subject to, not only the *moral* law, but the *ceremonial* also, that heavy yoke of bondage. Christ went through the time of his public ministry, in

delivering to us divine instructions and doctrines. The wisdom of God appears in giving us such a one to be our prophet and teacher, who is a divine person, who in himself the very wisdom and Word of God; and was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. His word is of greater authority and weight than if delivered by the mouth of an ordinary prophet. And how wisely ordered that the same should be our teacher and Redeemer, in order that his relations and offices, as Redeemer, might the more sweeten and endear his instructions to us. We are ready to give heed to what is said by those who are dear to us. Our love to their persons makes us to delight in their discourse. It is therefore wisely ordered, that he who has done so much to endear himself to us, should be appointed our great prophet, to deliver to us divine doctrines.

V. The next thing to be considered is the death of Christ. This is a means of salvation for poor sinners, that no other but divine wisdom would have pitched upon. And when revealed, it was doubtless greatly to the surprise of all the hosts of heaven, and they never will cease to wonder at it. How astonishing is it, that a person who is blessed forever, and is infinitely and essentially happy, should endure the greatest sufferings that ever were endured on earth! That a person who is the supreme Lord and judge of the world, should be arraigned, and should stand at the judgment-seat of mortal worms, and then be condemned. That a person who is the living God, and the fountain of life, should be put to death. That a person who created the world, and gives life to all his creatures, should be put to death by his own creatures. That a person of infinite majesty and glory, and so the object of love, praises, and adorations of angels, should be mocked and spit upon by the vilest of men. That a person, infinitely good, and who is love itself, should suffer the greatest cruelty. That a person who is infinitely beloved of the Father, should be put to inexpressible anguish under his own Father's wrath. That he who is King of heaven, who has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, should be buried in the prison of the grave. How wonderful is this! And yet this is the way that God's wisdom has fixed upon, as the way of sinner's salvation, as neither unsuitable nor dishonorable to Christ.

VI. The last thing done to procure salvation for sinners is Christ's *exaltation*. Divine wisdom saw it needful, or most expedient, that the

same person who died upon the cross, should sit at his right hand, on his own throne, as supreme Governor of the world, and should have particularly the absolute disposal of all things relating to man's salvation, and should be the judge of the world. This was needful, because it was requisite that the same person who purchased salvation, should have the bestowing of it. For it is not fit, that God should at all transact with the fallen creature in a way of mercy, but by a mediator. And this is exceedingly for the strengthening of the faith and comfort of the saints, that he who has endured so much to purchase salvation for them, has all things in heaven and in delivered unto him, that he might bestow eternal life on them for whom he purchased it. And that the same person that loved them so greatly as to shed his precious blood for them, was to be their final judge.

This then was another thing full of wonders, that he who was man as well as God, he who was a servant, and died like a malefactor; should be made the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, angels and men, the absolute disposer of eternal life and death, the supreme judge of all created intelligent beings, for eternity: and should have committed to him all the governing power of God the Father. And that, not only as God, but as God-man, not exclusive of the human nature.

As it is wonderful, that a person who is truly *divine* should be humbled so as to become a servant, and to suffer as a malefactor, so it is in like manner wonderful that he who is God-man, not exclusive of the manhood, should be exalted to the power and honor of the great God of heaven and earth. But such wonders as these has infinite wisdom contrived, and accomplished in order to our salvation.

SECTION II

In this way of salvation God is greatly glorified.

GOD has greatly glorified himself in the work of creation and providence. All his works praise him, and his glory shines brightly from them all. But as some stars differ from others in glory, so the glory of God shines brighter in some of his works than in others. And amongst all these, the work of redemption is like the sun in his strength. The glory of the author

is abundantly the most resplendent in this work.

I. Each *attribute* of God is glorified in the work or redemption. How God has exceedingly glorified his *wisdom,* may more fully appear before we have done with this subject. But more particularly,

First, God has exceedingly glorified his *power* in this work. — It shows the great and inconceivable power of God to unite natures so infinitely different, as the divine and human nature, in one person. If God can make one who is truly God, and one that is truly man, the self-same person, what is it that he cannot do? This is a greater and more marvelous work than creation.

The power of God most gloriously appears in man's being actually saved and redeemed in this way. In his being bought out of a state of sin and misery, into a conformity to God, and at last to the full and perfect enjoyment of God. This is a more glorious demonstration of divine power, than creating things out of nothing, upon two accounts. One is, the *effect is greater and more excellent*. To produce the new creature is a more glorious effect, than merely to produce a creature. — Making a holy creature, a creature in the spiritual image of God, in the image of the divine excellencies, and a partaker of the divine nature — is a greater effect than merely to give being. And therefore as the effect is greater, it is a more glorious manifestation of power.

And then, in this effect of the actual redemption of sinners, *the term from which, is more distant from the term to which,* than in the work of creation. The term from which, in the work of creation, is *nothing,* and the term to which, is *being*. But the term from which, in the work of redemption, is a state *infinitely worse than nothing;* and the term to which, *a holy and a happy being,* a state infinitely better than mere being. The terms in the production of the last are much more remote from one another, than in the first.

And then the production of this last effect is a more glorious manifestation of power than the work of creation, the terms are very distant — as *nothing* is very remote from *being* — yet there is no opposition to the creating power of God. — But in redemption, the divine

power meets with and overcomes great opposition. There is great opposition in a state of sin to a state of grace. Men's lusts and corruptions are exceedingly opposite to grace and holiness, and greatly resist the production of the effect. But this opposition is completely overcome in actual redemption.

Besides, there is the great opposition from Satan. The power of God is very glorious in this work because it therein conquers the strongest and most powerful enemies. Power never appears more illustrious than in conquering. Jesus Christ, in this work, conquers and triumphs over thousands of devils, strong and mighty spirits, uniting all their strength against him. Luke 11:21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace, but when a stronger than he shall overcome him, he taketh from his all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil." Col. 2:15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross."

Second, the *justice* of God is exceedingly glorified in this work. God is so strictly and immutably just, that he would not spare his beloved Son when he took upon him the guilt of men's sins, and was substituted in the room of sinners. He would not abate him the least mite of that debt which justice demanded. Justice should take place, though it cost his infinitely dear Son his precious blood, and his enduring such extraordinary reproach, and pain, and death in its most dreadful form.

Third, the *holiness* of God is also exceedingly glorious in this work. Never did God so manifest his hatred of sin as in the death and sufferings of his only-begotten Son. Hereby he showed himself unappeasable to sin, and that it was impossible for him to be at peace with it.

Fourth, God has also exceedingly glorified his truth in this way, both in his threatenings and promises. Herein is fulfilled the threatenings of the law, wherein God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." God showed hereby, that not only heaven and earth should pass away, but, which is more, that the blood of him who is the eternal Jehovah should be spilt, rather than one jot or tittle of his word should fail, till all be fulfilled.

Fifth, and lastly, God has exceedingly glorified his *mercy* and love in this work. The mercy of God was an attribute never seen before in its exercises, till it was seen in this work of redemption, or the fruits of it. The goodness of God appeared towards the angels in giving them being and blessedness. It appeared glorious towards man in his primitive state, a state of holiness and happiness. But now God has shown that he can find in his heart to love sinners, who deserve his infinite hatred. And not only has he shown that he can love them, but love them so as to give them more and do greater things for them than ever he did for the holy angels, that never sinned nor offended their Creator. He loved sinful men so as to give them a greater gift than ever he gave the angels; so as to give his own Son, and not only to give him to be their possession and enjoyment, but to give him to be their sacrifice. And herein he has done more for them than if he had given them all the visible world; yea, more than if he had given them all the angels, and all heaven besides. God has loved them so, that hereby he purchased for them deliverance from eternal misery, and the possession of immortal glory.

II. Each *person* of the Trinity is exceedingly glorified in this work. Herein the work of redemption is distinguished from all the other works of God. The attributes of God are glorious in his other works. But the three persons of the Trinity are distinctly glorified in no work as in this of redemption. In this work every distinct person has his distinct parts and offices assigned him. Each one has his particular and distinct concern in it, agreeable to their distinct, personal properties, relations, and economical offices. The redeemed have an equal concern with and dependence upon each person, in this affair, and owe equal honor and praise to each of them.

The Father appoints and provides the Redeemer, and accepts the price of redemption. The Son is the Redeemer and the price. He redeems by offering up himself. The Holy Ghost immediately communicates to us the thing purchased. Yea, and he is the good purchased. The sum of what Christ purchased for us is holiness and happiness. But the Holy Ghost is the great principle both of all holiness and happiness. The Holy Ghost is the sum of all that Christ purchased for men. Gal. 3:13, 14, “He was made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of The Spirit, through

faith."

The blessedness of the redeemed consists in partaking of Christ's fullness, which consists in partaking of that Spirit, which is given not by measure unto him. This is the oil that was poured upon the head of the church, which ran down to the members of his body, to the skirts of his garment. Thus we have an equal concern with and dependence upon each of the persons of the Trinity, distinctly; upon the Father, as he provides the Redeemer, and the person of whom the purchase is made, — the Son as the purchaser, and the price, — the Holy Ghost, as the good purchased.

SECTION III

The good attained by salvation is wonderfully various and exceeding great.

HERE we may distinctly consider — the *variety* — and the *greatness* — of the good procured for men.

I. The good procured by salvation is wonderfully *various*. Here are all sorts of good procured for fallen man, that he *does* or *can* really need, or is *capable* of. The wisdom of God appears in the way of salvation, in that it is most worthy of an infinitely wise God, because every way perfect and sufficient. We, in our fallen state, are most necessitous creatures, full of wants: but they are here all answered. Every sort of good is here procured, whatever would really contribute to our happiness, and even many things that we could not have thought of, had not Christ purchased them for us, and revealed them to us. Every demand of our circumstances, and craving of our natures, is here exactly answered. For instance,

First, we stand in need of *peace* with God. We had provoked God to anger, his wrath abode upon us, and we needed to have it appeased. This is done for us in this way of salvation. For Christ, by shedding his blood, has fully satisfied justice, and appeased God's wrath, for all that shall believe in him. By the sentence of the law we were condemned to hell.

And we needed to have our sins pardoned that we might be delivered from hell. But in this work, pardon of sin and deliverance from hell, is fully purchased for us.

Second, we needed not only to have God's wrath appeased and our sins pardoned, but we needed to have the *favor* of God. To have God, not only not our enemy, but our friend. Now God's favor is purchased for us by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Third, we needed not only to be delivered from hell, but to have some *satisfying happiness* bestowed. Man has a natural craving and thirst after happiness. And [he] will thirst and crave, till his capacity is filled. And his capacity is of vast extent. And nothing but an infinite good can fill and satisfy his desires. But, notwithstanding, provision is made in this way of salvation to answer those needed, there is a satisfying happiness purchased for us, that which is fully answerable to the capacity and cravings our souls.

Here is food procured to answer all the appetites and faculties of our souls. God has made the soul of man of a spiritual nature. And therefore he needs a corresponding happiness, some spiritual object, in the enjoyment of which he may be happy. Christ has purchased the enjoyment of God, who is the great and original Spirit, as the portion of our souls. And he has purchased the Spirit of God to come and dwell in us as an eternal principle of happiness.

God has made man a rational, intelligent creature. And man needs some good that shall be a suitable object of his understanding for him to contemplate, wherein he may have full and sufficient exercise for his capacious faculties, in their utmost extent. Here is an object that is great and noble, and worthy of the exercise of the noblest faculties of the rational soul. — God himself should be theirs, for them forever to behold and contemplate. His glorious perfections and works are most worthy objects. And there is room enough for improving them, and still to exercise their faculties to all eternity. — What object can be more worthy to exercise the understanding of a rational soul, than the glories of the Divine Being, with which the heavenly intelligences, and even the infinite understanding of God himself is entertained.

Our souls need some good that shall be a suitable object of the will and affections, a suitable object for the choice, the acquiescence, the love, and the joy of the rational soul. Provision is made for this also in this way of salvation. There is an infinitely excellent Being offered to be chosen, to be rested in, to be loved, to be rejoiced in, by us, even God himself, who is infinitely lovely, the fountain of all good; a fountain that can never be exhausted, where we can be in no danger of going to excess in our love and joy. And here we may be assured ever to find our joy and delight in enjoyments answerable to our love and desires.

Fourth, there is all possible enjoyment of this object procured in this way of salvation. When persons entirely set their love upon another, they naturally desire to *see* that person. Merely to hear of the person, does not satisfy love. So here is provision made that we should see God, the object of our supreme love. Not only that we should hear and read of him in his word, but that we should see him with a spiritual eye here. And not only so, but that we should have the satisfaction of seeing God face to face hereafter. This is promised Mat. 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." It is promised that we shall not see God, as through a glass darkly, as we do now, but face to face, 1 Cor. 13:12. That we shall see Christ as He is, 1 John 3:2.

We naturally desire not only to see those whom we love, but to *converse with* them. Provision is made for this also, that we should have spiritual conversation with God while in this world, and that we should be hereafter admitted to converse with Christ in the most intimate manner possible. Provision is made in this way of salvation, that we should converse with God much more intimately than otherwise it would have been possible for us. For now Christ is incarnate, is in our nature. He is become one of us, whereby we are under advantages for an immensely more free and intimate converse with him, than could have been, if he had remained only in the divine nature, and so in a nature infinitely distant from us. — We naturally desire not only to converse with those whom we greatly love, but to *dwell* with them. Provision, through Christ, is made for this. It is purchased and provided that we should dwell with God in his own house in heaven, which is called our Father's house. — To dwell forever in God's presence, and at his right hand.

We naturally desire to have a *right* in that person whom we greatly love. Provision is made, in this way of salvation, that we should have a right *in* God; a right *to* Him. This is the promise of the covenant of grace, "That he will be our God." God, with all his glorious perfections and attributes, with all his power and wisdom, and with all his majesty and glory, will be ours. So that we may call him our inheritance, and the portion of our souls. What we can humbly claim by faith, having this portion made over to us by a firm instrument, by a covenant ordered in all things and sure. — And we may also hereby claim a right to Jesus Christ. Love desires that the right should be *mutual*. The lover desires, not only to have a right to the beloved, but *that the beloved should also have a right to him*. He desires to be his beloved's, as well as his beloved should be his. Provision is also made for this, in this wise method of salvation, that God should have a special propriety in the redeemed, that they should be in a distinguishing manner *his,* that they should be his *peculiar* people. We are told that God sets apart the godly for himself, Psa. 4:3. They are called God's jewels. The spouse speaks it with great satisfaction and rejoicing. Song 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am His."

Love desires to stand in some *near relation* to the beloved. Provision is made by Christ, that we should stand in the nearest possible relation to God, that he should be our Father, and we should be his children. We are often instructed in the Holy Scriptures, that God is the Father of believers, and that they are his family. — And not only so, but they stand in the nearest relation to Christ Jesus. There is the closest union possible. The souls of believers are married to Christ. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Yea, there is yet a nearer similitude. Believers are as the very members of Christ, and of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. 5:30. Yea, this is not near enough yet, but *they are one spirit*, 1 Cor. 6:17.

Love naturally inclines to a *conformity* to the beloved. To have those excellencies, upon the account of which he is beloved, copied in himself. Provision is made in this way of salvation, that we may be conformed to God; that we shall be transformed into the same image. 2 Cor. 3:18, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image form glory to glory." — And that hereafter we shall see him as he is, and be like him.

It is the natural desire of love to do something for the beloved, either for his pleasure or honor. Provision is made for this also, in this way of salvation, that we should be made instruments of glorifying God, and promoting his kingdom here, and of glorifying him to all eternity.

Fifth, in this way of salvation, provision is made for our having *every sort of good* that man naturally craves, as honor, wealth, and pleasure. — Here is provision made that we should be brought to the highest *honor*. This is what God has promised, *that those that honor him, he will honor*. And that true Christians shall be kings and priest unto God. — Christ promised, *that as his Father has appointed unto him a kingdom, so he will appoint unto them, that they may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom*. He has promised to crown them with a crown of glory, and that *they shall sit with him in his throne. That he will confess their names before his Father, and before his angels. That he will give them a new name;* and that they *shall walk with him in white*.

Christ has also purchased for them the *greatest wealth*. All those that are in Christ are rich. They are *now* rich. They have the *best* riches, being rich in faith, and the graces of the Spirit of God. They have gold tried in the fire. They have durable riches and righteousness. They have treasure in heaven, where neither thief approaches, nor moth corrupts. An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. They are possessors of all things.

Christ has also purchased *pleasure* for them, pleasures that are immensely preferable to all the pleasures of sense, most exquisitely sweet, and satisfying. He has purchased for them fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore at God's right hand. And they shall drink of the river of God's pleasure.

Sixth, Christ has purchased all needed good *both for soul and body*. While we are here, we stand in need of these earthly thing. And of these Christ has purchased all that are best for us. He has purchased for the body that God should feed and clothe us. Mat. 6:26, "How much more shall he *feed* you, O ye of little faith!" How much more shall he *clothe* you! Christ has purchased, that God should take care of us, and provide what is needed of these things, as a father provides for his children. 1 Pet.

5:7, “Casting your care upon him, for he careth for you.”

Seventh, Christ has purchased good that is suitable for his people *in all conditions*. There is, in this way of salvation, respect had to, and provision made for, all circumstances that they can be in. Here is provision made, for a time of affliction — for a time of poverty and pinching want — for a time of bereavement and mourning — for spiritual darkness — for a day of temptation — for a time of persecution — and for a time of death. Here is such a provision made that is sufficient to carry a person above death, and all it terrors, and to give him a complete triumph over that king of terrors. Here is enough to sweeten the grave, and make it cease to seem desirable, and in its near approach to be not terrible but joyful.

Eighth, there is provision made in this way of salvation for the life and blessedness of soul and body *to all eternity*. Christ has purchased, that we should be delivered from a state of temporal death, as well as *spiritual* and *eternal*. The bodies of the saints shall be raised to life. He has purchased all manner of perfection for the body of which it is capable. It shall be raised a spiritual body in incorruption and glory, and be made like Christ’s glorious body, to shine as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and to exist in a glorified state in union with the soul to all eternity.

Ninth, but man in his fallen state still needs something else in order to his happiness, that these fore-mentioned blessings should be purchased for him, *viz.*. he needs to be *qualified* for the possession and enjoyment of them. In order to our having a title to *these* blessings of the covenant of grace (so that we can scripturally *claim* an interest in them), there is a certain condition must be performed by us. We must *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *accept* of him as offered in the gospel for a Savior. But, as we cannot do this of ourselves, Christ has purchased this also for all the elect. He has purchased, that they shall have faith given them, whereby they shall be (actively) united to Christ, and so have a (pleadable) title to his benefits.

But still something further is necessary for man, in order to his coming to the actual possession of the inheritance. A man, as soon as he has

believed, has a title to the inheritance. But in order to come to the actual possession of it, he must *persevere* in a way of holiness. There is not only a gate that must be entered, but there is a narrow way that must be traveled before we can arrive at heavenly blessedness. And that is a way of universal and persevering holiness. But men, after they have believed, cannot persevere in a way of holiness of themselves. But there is sufficient provision made for this also, in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. The matter of a saint's perseverance is sufficiently secured by the purchase that Christ has made.

But still there is something else needful in order to qualify a person for the actual entering upon the enjoyments and employments of a glorified estate, *viz.* that he should be made *perfectly holy*; that all remainders of sin should be taken away. For there cannot any sin enter into heaven. No soul must go into the glorious presence of God, with the least degree of the filth of sin. But there is provision made. For Christ has purchased that all sin shall be taken away out of the hearts of believers at death, and that they should be made perfectly holy, whereby they shall be fully and perfectly qualified to enter upon the pleasures and enjoyments of the new Jerusalem.

II. To consider the good attained for us by this way of salvation, as *exceeding great*.

There is not only every sort of good we need, but of every sort in *that* degree, so as to answer the extent of our capacity, and the greatest stretch of our desires, and indeed of our conceptions. They are not only greater than our conceptions are here, but also greater than ever they could be, were it not that God's relation, and our own experience, will teach us. They are greater than the tongue of angels can declare, the *deliverance* that we have in it is exceeding great. It is deliverance from guilt, from sin itself, from the anger of God, and from the miseries of hell.

How great is the *good conferred!* The objective good in the infinite God, and the glorious Redeemer, Jesus Christ. How great is the love of the Father, and the Son! And how near the relation between them and the true believer! How close the union, how intimate the communion, and ultimately how clear will be the vision in glory!

There are great *communications* made to the believing soul on earth, but how much greater in heaven! Then their conformity to God will be perfect, their enjoyment of him will be full, their honor great and unsullied, and the glory of body and soul ineffable. The riches of the Christian are immense. All things are included in his treasure. Pleasures unspeakably and inconceivably great await him, rivers of delight, fullness of joy; and all of infinite duration.

The benefit procured for us, is *doubly* infinite. Our deliverance is an infinite benefit, because the evil we are delivered from in infinite. And the positive good bestowed is eternal, *viz.* the full enjoyment of all those blessings merited.

SECTION IV

How angels are benefited by the salvation of men.

SO has the wisdom of God contrived this affair, that the benefit of what he has done therein should be so extensive, as to reach the elect angels. It is for men that the work of redemption is wrought out. And yet the benefit of the things done in this work is not confined to them, though all that is properly called redemption, or included in it, is confined to men. The angels cannot partake in this, having never fallen. Yet they have great indirect benefit by it. — God has so wisely ordered, that what has been done in this directly and especially for men, should redound to the exceeding benefit of all intelligent creatures who are in favor with God. The benefit of it is so diffusive as to reach heaven itself. So great and manifold is the good attained in this work, that those glorious spirits who are so much above us, and were so highly exalted in happiness before, yet should receive great addition hereby. — I will show how in some particulars.

I. The angels hereby see a great and wonderful manifestation of the glory of God. The happiness of angels as well as of men consists very much in beholding the glory of God. The excellency of the Divine Being is a most delightful subject of contemplation to the saints on earth, but much more

to the angels in heaven. The more holy any being is, the more sweet and delightful will it be to him to behold the glory and beauty of the Supreme Being. — Therefore the beholding of the glory of God must be ravishing to the holy angels of God who are perfect in holiness, and never had their minds leavened with sin. The manifestations of the glory of God, are as it were the food that satisfies the angels. They live thereon. It is their greatest happiness.

It is without doubt much of their employment to behold the glory of God appearing in his works. Therefore this work of redemption greatly contributes to their happiness and delight, as the glory of God is so exceedingly manifested by it. For what is done, is done, in the sight of the angels, as is evident by many passages of Holy Scripture. And they behold the glory of God appearing herein with entertainment and delight, as it is manifest by 1 Pet. 1:12, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

The angels have this advantage, that now they may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, where it shines with a peculiar luster and brightness. 1 Tim. 3:16, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels." Perhaps all God's attributes are more gloriously manifested in this work than in any other that ever the angels saw. There is certainly a fuller manifestation of some of his attributes than ever they saw before, as is evident by the text. And especially, it is so with respect to the mercy of God, that sweet and endearing attribute of the divine nature. The angels of heaven never saw so much grace manifested before, as in the work of redemption, nor in any measure equal to it. How full of joy does it fill the hearts of the angels, to see such a boundless and bottomless ocean of love and grace in their God. And therefore with what rejoicing do all the angels praise Christ for his being slain! Rev. 5:11, 12, "And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

II. They have this benefit by it, that hereby Jesus Christ, God-man, is become their head. God, subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and

Holy Ghost, was the king of angels, and would have been, if it had not been for our redemption. But it was owing to what is done in this work, that Jesus Christ as God-man, becomes the head of the angels. Christ is now not only the head of angels simply as God, but as God-man. Col. 2:10, "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." Eph. 1:20-22, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church."

This is a part of the exaltation and glory of Christ which God confers on him as his reward. And not only so, but it is greatly to the angels' benefit. It is God's manner in his dealings with his elect creatures, in the same works wherein he glorifies himself, or his Son, greatly to benefit them. The same dealings of his that are most for his glory, shall be most for their good. — That Christ, God-man, should be made the head of the angels, is greatly to their benefit several ways.

First, because they become hereby more nearly related to so glorious a person, the Son of God, than otherwise they would have. The angels esteem it a great honor done them to be related to such a person as Jesus Christ, God-man, who is an infinitely honorable person.

The angels, by Christ becoming their head, are with the saints gathered together in one in Christ, Eph. 1:10. They by virtue hereof, though Christ be not their Redeemer as he is ours, have a right and propriety in this glorious person, as well as we. He is theirs. Though not their Savior, yet he is their head of government, and head of influence.

Second, again, this is greatly to their *benefit*, as they are under advantages for a far more intimate converse with God. The divine nature is at an infinite distance from the nature of angels, as well as from the nature of man. This distance forbids a familiarity and intimacy of intercourse. — It is therefore a great advantage to the angels that God has come to them in a created nature, and in that nature has become their head, so that their intercourse and enjoyment may be more intimate.

They are invited by the similar qualifications of the created nature, with which the Son of God is invested.

Third, it is for the benefit of the angels, as hereby the elect of mankind are gathered into their society. Christ, by the work of redemption, gathers in the elect of mankind to join the angels of heaven. Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Men are brought in to join with the angels in their work of praising God, to partake with them of their enjoyments. The angels greatly rejoice at this. They rejoice when but one person is gathered in, as Christ teaches us. Luke 15:10, "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The heavenly society is made more complete by this accession of the saints to it. They contribute to the happiness of each other. The angels rejoice that others are added to join them and assist them in praising God. — And thus the vacancy by the fall of angels is filled up.

Fourth, it tends to make the angels to prize their happiness the more when they see how much it cost to purchase the same happiness for man. Though they knew so much, yet they are not incapable of being taught more and more the worth of their own happiness. For when they saw how much it cost to purchase the same happiness for man, even the precious blood of the Son of God, this tended to give them a great sense of the infinite value of their happiness. They never saw such a testimony of the value of the eternal enjoyment of God before.

Thus we have shown, how the wisdom of God appears in the work of redemption in the good ends attained thereby, with respect to God, men, and good angels.

But are there any good ends obtained with respect to *bad* angels, God's grand enemies? Undoubtedly there are, as may appear from the few following considerations. Satan and his angels rebelled against God in heaven, and proudly presumed to try their strength with his. And when God by his almighty power overcame the strength of Satan, and sent him like lightning from heaven to hell with all his army, Satan still hoped to get the victory by subtlety. Though he could not overcome by power, yet

he hoped to succeed by craft. And so by his subtlety to disappoint God of his end in creating this lower world. — God therefore has shown his great wisdom in overthrowing Satan's design. He has disappointed the devices of the crafty, so that they cannot perform their enterprise. He has carried their counsel headlong.

1. Satan thought to have disappointed God of his glory, which he designed in creation this lower world, and to make mankind be for his own glory, in setting up himself god over them. Now Christ, by what he has done in the work of redemption, has overthrown Satan, and utterly frustrated him as to this end. God is exceedingly glorified in the elect, to the surprise of angels and devils. God by redemption has all the glory that he intended, and more than either men, angels, or devils imagined that God intended. God might have glorified his justice in the destruction of all mankind. But it was God's design in creation the world, to glorify his goodness and love. And not only to be glorified eventually, but to be served and glorified actually by men. Satan intended to frustrate God of this end. But, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, his design is confounded.

2. Another design of the devil was to gratify his envy in the utter destruction of mankind. But, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, this malicious design of Satan is crossed, because all the elect are brought to their designed happiness, which is much greater than ever Satan thought it was in God's heart to bestow on man. And though some of mankind are left to be miserable, yet that does not answer Satan's end. For this also is ordered for God's glory. No more are left miserable than God saw meet to glorify his justice upon.

One end why God suffered Satan to do what he did in procuring the fall of man was that his Son might be glorified in conquering that strong, subtle, and proud spirit, and triumphing over him. How glorious does Christ Jesus appear in baffling and triumphing over this proud king of darkness, and all the haughty confederate rulers of hell. How glorious a sight is it to see the meek and patient Lamb of God leading that proud, malicious, and mighty enemy in triumph! What songs does this cause in heaven! It was a glorious sight in Israel, who came out with timbrels and with dances, and sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." But

how much more glorious to see the Son of David, the Son of God, carrying the head of the spiritual Goliath, the champion of the armies of hell, in triumph to the heavenly Jerusalem! It is with a principal view to this, that Christ is called, "the Lord of hosts, or armies, and a man of war," Exo. 15:3. And Psa. 24:8, "Who is this king of glory! The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

SECTION V

In this way of salvation wonderful glory redounds to God, as to the effect of divine wisdom.

I. BY this contrivance for our redemption, God's greatest dishonor is made an *occasion* of his greatest glory. Sin is a thing by which God is greatly dishonored. The nature of its principle is enmity against God, and contempt of him. And man, by his rebellion, has greatly dishonored God. But this dishonor, by the contrivance of our redemption, is made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's glory that ever was. Sin, the greatest evil, is made an occasion of the greatest good. It is the nature of a principle of sin that it seeks to dethrone God. But this is made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's royal majesty and glory that ever was. By sin, man has slighted and despised God, but this is made an occasion of his appearing the more greatly honorable. Sin casts contempt upon the authority and law of God. But this, by the contrivance of our redemption, is made the occasion of the greatest honour done to that same authority, and to that very law. It was a greater honor to the law of God that Christ was subject to it, and obeyed it, than if all mankind had obeyed it. It was greater honor to God's authority that Christ showed such great respect, and such entire subjection to it, than the perfect obedience of all the angels in heaven. Man by his sin showed his enmity against the holiness of God. But this is made an occasion of the greatest manifestation of God's holiness. The holiness of God never appeared to so great a degree, as when God executed vengeance upon his own dear Son.

II. So has the wisdom of God contrived that those attributes are glorified in man's salvation, whose glory seemed to require his *destruction*. When

man had fallen, several attributes of God seemed to require his destruction. The justice of God requires that sin be punished as it deserves. But it deserves no less than eternal destruction. God proclaims it as a part of glory of his nature that he will in no wise clear the guilty, Exo. 34:7. The holiness of God seemed to require man's destruction. For God by his holiness infinitely hates sin. This seemed to require therefore that God should manifest a proportionable hatred of the sinner. And that he should be forever an enemy unto him. The truth of God seemed also to require man's destruction. For eternal death was what God had threatened for sin, one jot or tittle of which threatening cannot by any means pass away. But yet so has God contrived, that those very attributes not only allow of man's redemption, and are not inconsistent with it, but they are glorified in it. Even vindictive justice is glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. The holiness of God, or his holy hatred of sin, that seemed to require man's damnation, is seen in Christ's dying for sinners. So herein also is manifested and glorified the truth of God, in the threatenings of the law.

III. Yea, it is so ordered now that the glory of these attributes *requires* the salvation of those that believe. The justice of God that required man's damnation, and seemed inconsistent with his salvation, now as much requires the salvation of those that believe in Christ, as ever before it required their damnation. Salvation is an absolute debt to the believer from God, so that he may in justice demand it, on account of what his surety has done. For Christ has satisfied justice fully for his sin. It is but a piece of justice, that the creditor should release the debtor, when he has fully paid the debt. And again, the believer may demand eternal life, because it has been merited by Christ, by a merit of condignity. So is it contrived, that justice that seemed to require man's destruction, now requires his salvation.

So the truth of God that seemed to require man's damnation, now requires his salvation. At the same time that the threatening of the law stands good, there is a promise of eternal life to many who have broken the law. They both stand good at the same time. And the truth of God requires that both should be fulfilled. How much soever they seemed to clash, yet so is the matter contrived in this way of salvation, that both are

fulfilled and do not interfere one with another.

At the very time that God uttered the threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and at the time that Adam had first eaten the forbidden fruit, there was then an existing promise, that many thousands of Adam's race should obtain eternal life. This promise was made to Jesus Christ before the world was. What a difficulty and inconsistency did there seem to be here? But it was no difficulty to the wisdom of God that the promise and the threatening should be both fully accomplished to the glory of God's truth in each of them. Psa. 25:10, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

IV. Those very attributes which seemed to require man's destruction are *more glorious* in his salvation than they would have been in his destruction. The revenging justice of God is a great deal more *manifested* in the death of Christ than it would have been if all mankind had been sufferers to all eternity. If man had remained under the guilt and imputation of sin, the justice of God would not have had such a *trial* as it had, when his own Son was under the imputation of sin. If all mankind had stood guilty, and justice had called for vengeance upon them, that would not have been such a trial of the inflexibleness and unchangeableness of the justice of God, as when his own Son, who was the object of his infinite love, and in whom he infinitely delighted, stood with the imputation of guilt upon him.

This was the greatest trial that could be, to manifest whether God's justice was perfect and unchangeable, or not. Whether God was so just that he would not upon any account abate of what justice required. And whether God would have any respect to persons in judgment.

So the *majesty* of God appears much more in the sufferings of Christ than it would have done in the eternal sufferings of all mankind. The majesty of a prince appears greater in the just punishment of great personages under the guilt of treason, than of inferior persons. The sufferings of Christ have this advantage over the eternal sufferings of the wicked, for impressing upon the minds of the spectators a sense of the dread majesty of God, and his infinite hatred of sin; *viz.* that the eternal sufferings of the

wicked never will be seen actually accomplished, and finished, whereas they have seen that which is equivalent to those eternal sufferings actually fulfilled and finished in the sufferings of Christ.

V. Such is the wisdom of salvation, that the more any of the elect have dishonored God, the more is God glorified in this redemption. Such wonders as these are accomplished by the wisdom of this way of salvation. Such things as these, if they had been proposed to any created intelligence, would have seemed strange and unaccountable paradoxes, till the counsels of divine wisdom concerning the matter were unfolded.

So sufficient is this way of salvation, that it is not inconsistent with any of God's attributes to save the chief of sinners. However great a sinner any one has been, yet God can, if he pleased, save without any injury to the glory of any one attribute. And not only so, but the more sinful any one has been, the more does God glorify himself in his salvation. The more does he glorify his power, that he can redeem one in whom sin so abounds, and of whom Satan has such strong possession. — The greater triumph has Christ over his grand adversary, in redeeming and setting at liberty from his bondage those that were his greatest vassals. The more does the sufficiency of Christ appear, in that it is sufficient for such vile wretches.

The more is the sovereignty and boundless extent of the mercy of God manifested, in that it is sufficient to redeem those that are undeserving. Rom. 5:20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

SECTION VI

How the wisdom of God appears in the manner and circumstances of obtaining the good intended.

WE now come to take notice of some wonderful circumstances of the attainment of our good, hereby; which shows the great wisdom of the contrivance.

I. So has God contrived in this way, that a sinful creature should become not guilty; and that he who has no righteousness of his own, should become righteous. These things, if they had been proposed, would have appeared contradictious to any but the divine understanding.

If it had been proposed to any created intelligence, to find out a way in which a *sinful* creature should not be a *guilty* creature, how impossible would it have been judged, that there should be any way at all. It would doubtless have been judged impossible but that he who has committed sin, must stand guilty of the sin he has committed. And if sin necessarily obliges to punishment, it must oblige him who has committed it. If punishment and sin be inseparable, then that punishment, and the sinner are inseparable. If the law denounces death to the person who is guilty of sin, and if it be impossible that the law should not take place, then he who has committed sin must die. Thus any created understanding would have thought.

And if it had been proposed that here should be some way found out, wherein man might be righteous without fulfilling righteousness himself, so that he might reasonably and properly be looked upon and accepted as a righteous person, and adjudged to the reward of righteousness, and yet have no righteousness, and yet have broken the law, and done nothing else but break it — this doubtless would have been looked upon as impossible and contradictious.

But yet the wisdom of God has truly accomplished each of these things. He has accomplished that men, though sinners, should be without guilt, in that he has found out a way that the threatenings of the law should truly and properly be fulfilled, and punishment be executed on sin, and yet not on the sinner. The sufferings of Christ answer the demands of the law, with respect to the sins of those who believe in him. And justice is truly satisfied thereby. And the law is fulfilled and answered by the obedience of Christ, so that his righteousness should properly be our righteousness. Though not performed by us, yet it is properly and reasonably accepted for us, as much as if we had performed it ourselves. Divine wisdom has so contrived, that such an interchanging of sin and righteousness should be consistent, and most agreeable with reason, with the law, and God's holy attributes. For Jesus Christ has so united himself

to us, and us to him, as to make himself ours, our head. The love of Christ to the elect is so great, that God the Father looks upon it proper and suitable to account Christ and the elect as one; and accordingly to account what Christ does and suffers, as if they *did* and *suffered* it. — That love of Christ which is so great as to render him willing to put himself in the stead of the elect, and to bear the misery that they deserved, does, in the Father's account, so unite Christ and the elect, that they may be looked upon as legally one.

II. It shows wonderful wisdom that our good should be procured by such seemingly unlikely and opposite means, as the humiliation of the Son of God. When Christ was about to undertake that great work of redemption, he did not take the method that any creature wisdom would have thought as the most proper. Creature wisdom would have determined that in order to his effectually and more gloriously accomplishing such a great work, he should rather have been exalted higher, if it had been possible, rather than humbled so low. — Earthly kings and princes, when they are about to engage in any great and difficult work, will put on their strength, an will appear in all their majesty and power, that they may be successful. — But when Christ was about to perform the great work of redeeming a lost world, the wisdom of God took an opposite method, and determined that he should be humbled and abased to a mean state, and appear in low circumstances. He did not deck himself with glory, but laid it aside. He emptied himself. Phil. 2:6, 7, 8, "Being in the form of God — he made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." — Creature wisdom would have thought that Christ, in order to perform this great work, should deck himself with all his strength. But divine wisdom determined that he should be made weak, or put on the infirmities of human nature.

And why did divine wisdom determine that he should become thus weak? It was that he might be subject to want, and to suffering, and to the power and malice of his enemies. But then what advantage could it be to him in this work, to be subject to the power and malice of his enemies? It was the very design on which he came into the world, to overcome his

enemies.

Who would have thought that this was the way to overthrow them, that he should become weak and feeble, and for that very end that he might be subject to their power and malice. But this is the very means by which God determined that Christ should prevail against his enemies, even that he should be subject to their power, that they might prevail against him, so as to put him to disgrace, and pain, and death.

What other but divine wisdom could ever have determined, that this was the way to be taken in order to being successful in the work of our redemption. This would have appeared to creature wisdom the most direct course to be frustrated that could be devised. But it was indeed the way to glorious success, and the only way. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men," 1 Cor. 1:25. God has brought strength out of weakness, glory out of ignominy and reproach. Christ's shame and reproach are the only means by which a way is made to our eternal honor.

The wisdom of God has made Christ's humiliation the means of our exaltation. His coming down from heaven is that which brings us to heaven. The wisdom of God has made life the fruit of death. The death of Christ was the only means by which we could have eternal life. The death of a person who was God, was the only way by which we could come to have life in God. — Here favor is made to arise out of wrath; our acceptance into God's favor out of God's wrath upon his own Son. A blessing rises out of curse; our everlasting blessedness, from Christ being made a curse for us. Our righteousness is made to rise out Christ's imputed guilt. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God, 2 Cor. 5:21. By such wonderful means has the wisdom of God procured our salvation.

III. Our sin and misery, by this contrivance, are made an occasion of our greater blessedness. This is a very wonderful thing. It would have been a very wonderful thing if we had been merely restored from sin and misery, to be as we were before. But it was a much more wonderful thing that we should be brought to a higher blessedness than ever, and that our sin and misery should be the occasion of it, and should make way for it.

First, it was wonderful that *sin* should be made the occasion of our greater blessedness. For sin deserves misery. By our sin we had deserved to be everlastingly miserable. But this is so turned by divine wisdom, that it is made an occasion of our being more happy. — It was a strange thing that sin should be the occasion of anything else but misery. But divine wisdom has found out a way whereby the sinner might not only escape being miserable, but that he should be happier than before he sinned, yea than he would have been if he had never sinned at all. And this sin and unworthiness of his are the occasion of this greater blessedness.

Second, it was a wonderful thing that man's own *misery* should be an occasion of his greater happiness. For happiness and misery are contraries. And man's misery was very great. He was under the wrath and curse of God, and condemned to everlasting burning. — But the sin and misery of man, by this contrivance, are made an occasion of his being more happy, not only than he was before the fall, but than he would have been if he never had fallen.

Our first parents, if they had stood and persevered in perfect obedience, till God had given them the fruit of the tree of life as a seal of their reward, would probably have been advanced to higher happiness. For they before were but in a state probation for their reward. And it is not to be supposed but that their happiness was to have been greater after they had persisted in obedience, and had actually received the reward, than it was while they were in a state of trial for it. But by the redemption of Christ, the sin and misery of the elect are made an occasion of their being brought to a higher happiness than mankind would have had if they had persisted in obedience till they had received the reward. — For,

1. Man is hereby brought to a greater and nearer *union* with God. If man had never fallen, God would have remained man's friend. He would have enjoyed God's favor, and so would have been the object of Christ's favor, as he would have had the favor of all the persons of the Trinity. — But now Christ becoming our surety and Savior, and having taken on him our nature, occasions between Christ and us an union of a quite different kind, and a nearer relation than otherwise would have been. The fall is the occasion of Christ's becoming our head, and the church his body. And believers are become his brethren, and spouse, in a manner that

otherwise would not have been. And by our union with Christ we have a greater union with the natural Son of God. Gal. 4:4-6, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” And therefore Christ has taught us, in all our addresses to God, to call him our Father, in like manner as he calls him Father John 20:17, “Go tell my brethren, behold I ascend to my Father, and your Father.”

This is one of the wonderful things brought about by the work of redemption, that thereby our separation from God is made an occasion of a greater union than was before, or otherwise would have been. — When we fell, there was dreadful separation made betwixt God and us, but this is made an occasion of a greater union. John 17:20-23, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”

2. Man now has greater *manifestations* of the *glory* and *love* of God than otherwise he would have had. In the manifestations of these two things, man’s happiness principally consists. Now, man by the work of redemption, has greater manifestation of both, than otherwise he would have had. We have already spoken particularly of the glory of God, and what advantages even the angels have by the discoveries of it in this work. But if *they* have such advantages, much more will *man* who is far more directly concerned in this affair than they. — Here are immediately greater displays of the love of God, than man had before he fell: or, as we may well suppose, than he would have had, if he had never fallen. God now manifests his love to his people by sending his Son into the world to die for them. There never would have been any such testimony of the love of God, if man had not fallen.

Christ manifests his love, by coming into the world, and laying down his life. This is the greatest testimony of divine love that can be conceived.

Now surely the greater discoveries God's people have of his love to them, the more occasion will they have to rejoice in that love. Here will be a delightful theme for the saints to contemplate to all eternity, which they never could have had, if man never had fallen, *viz.* the dying love of Christ. They will have occasion now to sing that song forever. Rev. 1:5,6, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to whom be glory and dominion for ever. Amen."

3. Man now has greater *motives* offered him to love God than otherwise he ever would have had. Man's happiness consists in mutual love between God and man, in seeing God's love to him, and in reciprocally loving God. And the more he sees of God's love to him, and the more he loves God, the more happy must he be. His love to God is as necessary in order to his happiness, as the seeing of God's love to him. For he can have no joy in beholding God's love to him, any otherwise than as he loves God. — This make the saints prize God's love to them. For *they love him*. If they did not love God, to see his love to them would not make them happy. But the more any person loves another, the more will he be delighted in the manifestations of that other's love. — There is provision therefore made for both in the work of redemption. There are greater *manifestations* of the love of God to us, than there would have been if man had not fallen. And also there are greater *motives* to love him than otherwise there would have been. There are greater *obligations* to love him, for God has done more for us to win our love. Christ has died for us.

Again, man is now brought to a more universal and immediate and *sensible dependence* on God, than otherwise he would have been. All his happiness is now *of* him, *through* him, *in* him. If man had not fallen, he would have had all his happiness of God by his own righteousness. But now it is by the righteousness of Christ. He would have had all his holiness of God, but not so sensibly, because then he would have been holy from the beginning, as soon as he received his being. But now, he is first sinful and universally corrupt, and afterwards is made holy. If man had held his integrity misery would have been a stranger to him. And therefore happiness would not have been so sensible a derivation from God, as it is now, when man looks to God from the deeps of distress, cries

repeatedly to him, and waits upon him. He is convinced by abundant experience, that he has no place of resort but God, who is graciously pleased, in consequence of man's earnest and persevering suit, to appear to his relief, to take him out of the miry clay and horrible pit, set him upon a rock, establish his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. — By man's having thus a more immediate, universal, and sensible dependence, God does more entirely secure man's undivided respect. There is a greater motive for man to make God his all in all, — to love him rejoice in him as his only portion.

4. By the contrivance for our salvation, man's sin and misery are but an occasion of his being brought to a more full and free *converse* with and *enjoyment* of God than otherwise would have been. For as we have observed already, the union is greater; and the greater the union, the more full the communion, and intimate the intercourse. — Christ is come down to man in his own nature. And hereby he may converse with Christ more intimately, than the infinite distance of the divine nature would allow. This advantage is more than what the angels have. For Christ is not only in a *created* nature, but he *is in man's own nature.* — We have also advantages for a more full *enjoyment* of God. By Christ's incarnation, the saints may see God with their bodily eyes, as well as by an intellectual view. The saints, after the day of judgment, will consist of both body and soul. They will have outward as well as spiritual sight. It is now ordered by divine wisdom, that God himself, or a divine person, should be the principal entertainment of both these kinds of sight, spiritual and corporal. And the saints in heaven shall not only have an intellectual sight of God, but they shall see a divine person as they see one another; not only spiritually, but outwardly. — The body of Jesus Christ will appear with that transcendent visible majesty and beauty, which is exceedingly expressive of the divine majesty, beauty, and glory. The body of Christ shall appear with the glory of God upon it, as Christ tells us. Mat. 16:27, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father." Thus to see God will be a great happiness to the saints. Job comforted himself that he should see God with his bodily eyes. Job 19:26, "And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

5. Man's sin and misery is made an occasion of his greater happiness, as

he has now a greater relish of happiness, by reason of his knowledge of both. In order to happiness, there must be two things, *viz.* union to a proper object — and a relish of the object. Man's misery is made an occasion of increasing both these by the work of redemption. We have shown already, that the union is increased, and so is the relish too, by the knowledge man now has of evil. These contraries, good and evil, heighten the sense of one another. The forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of *evil,* because by it we came to the experience of evil. Of *good*, because we should never have known so well what good was, if it had not been for that tree. We are taught the value of good, by our knowledge of its contrary, evil. This teaches us to prize good, and makes us the more to relish and rejoice in it. The saints know something what a state of sin and alienation from God is. They know something what the anger of God is, and what it is to be in danger of hell. And this makes them the more exceedingly to rejoice in the favor and in the enjoyment of God.

Take two persons; one who never knew what evil was, but was happy from the first moment of his being, having the favor of God, and numerous tokens of it; another who is in a very doleful and undone condition. Let there be bestowed upon these two persons the same blessings, [subjectively,] the same good things. And let them be objectively in the same glorious circumstances, — and which will rejoice most? Doubtless he that was brought to this happiness out of a miserable and doleful state. So the saints in heaven will forever the more rejoice in God, and in the enjoyment of his love, for their being brought to it out of a most lamentable state and condition.

SECTION VII

Some wonderful circumstances of the overthrow of Satan.

THE wisdom of God greatly and remarkably appears in so exceedingly baffling and compounding all the subtlety of the old serpent. Power never appears so conspicuous as when opposed and conquering opposition. The same may be said of wisdom. It never appears so brightly, and with such

advantage, as when opposed by the subtlety of some very crafty enemy, and in baffling and confounding that subtlety. — The devil is exceeding subtle. The subtlety of the serpent is emblematical of his, Gen. 3:1. He was once one of the brightest intelligences of heaven, and one of the brightest, if not the very brightest, of all. And all the devils were once morning stars, of a glorious brightness of understanding. They still have the same faculties, though they ceased to be influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit of God. And so their heavenly wisdom is turned into hellish craft and subtlety. — God in the work of redemption has wondrously baffled the utmost craft of the devils, and though they are all combined to frustrate God's designs of glory to himself, and goodness to men. — The wisdom of God appears very glorious herein. For,

I. Consider the weak and seemingly despicable means and weapons that God employs to overthrow Satan. Christ poured the greater contempt upon Satan in the victory that he obtained over him, by reason of the means of his preparing himself for it, and the weapons he has used. Christ chooses to encounter Satan in the human nature, in a poor, frail, afflicted state. He did as David did. David when going against the Philistine refused Saul's armor, a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, and his sword. No, he puts them all off. Goliath comes mightily armed against David, with a helmet of brass upon his head, a coat of mail weighing five thousand shekels of brass, greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders, a spear, whose staff was like a weaver's beam, and the spear's head weighing six hundred shekels of iron. And besides all this, he had one bearing a shield before him. But David takes nothing but a staff in his hand, and a shepherd's bag and a sling, and he goes against the Philistine. So the weapons that Christ made use of were his poverty, afflictions and reproaches, sufferings and death. His principal weapon was his cross, the instrument of his own reproachful death. These were seemingly weak and despicable instruments to wield against such a giant as Satan. And doubtless the devil disdained them as much as Goliath did David's staves and sling. But with such weapons as these has Christ in a human, weak, mortal nature overthrown and baffled all the craft of hell.

Such disgrace and contempt has Christ poured upon Satan. David had a

more glorious victory over Goliath for his conquering him with such mean instruments; and Samson over the Philistines, for killing so many of them with such a despicable weapon as the jaw-bone of an ass. It is spoken of in Scripture as a glorious triumph of Christ over the devil, that he should overcome him by such a despicable weapon as his cross. Col. 2:14, 15, "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." — God shows his great and infinite wisdom in taking this method, to confound the wisdom and subtlety of his enemies. He hereby shows how easily he can do it, and that he infinitely wiser than they. 1 Cor. 1:27-29, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty: and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are."

II. God has thereby confounded Satan with his own weapons. It is so contrived in the work of redemption, that our grand enemy should be made a means of his own confusion. And that, by those very things whereby he endeavors to rob God of his glory, and to destroy mankind, he is made an instrument of frustrating his own designs. His most subtle and powerful endeavors for accomplishing his designs are made a means of confounding them, and of promoting the contrary. Of this, I will mention but two instances.

First, his procuring man's fall is made an occasion of the contrary to what he designed. Indeed he has hereby procured the ruin of multitudes of mankind, which he aimed at. But in this he does not frustrate God's design from all eternity to glorify himself. And the misery of multitudes of mankind will prove no content to him, but will enhance his own misery.

What Satan did in tempting man to fall is made an occasion of the contrary to what he intended, in that it gave occasion for God to glorify himself the more; and giveth occasion for the elect being brought to higher happiness.

The happy state of man was envied by Satan. That man who was of

earthly original should be advance to such honors, when he who was originally of a so much more noble nature should be cast down to such disgrace, his pride could not bear. How then would Satan triumph, when he had brought him down!

The devil tempted our first parents with this, that if they would eat of the forbidden fruit, they should be a gods. — It was a lie in Satan's mouth. For he aimed at nothing else but to fool man out of his happiness, and make him his own slave and vassal, with a blinded expectation of being like a god. — But little did Satan think that God would turn it so, as to make man's fall an occasion of God's becoming man. And so an occasion of our nature being advanced to a state of closer union to God.

By this means it comes to pass, that one in man's nature now sits at the right hand of God, invested with divine power and glory, and reigns over heaven and earth with God-like power and dominion. Thus is Satan disappointed in his subtlety. As he intended that saying, *Ye shall be as gods,* it was lie, to decoy and befool man. Little did he think that it would be in such manner verified by the incarnation of the Son of God. And this is the occasion also of all the elect being united to this divine person, so that they become one with Christ. Believers are as members and parts of Christ. Yea, the church is called Christ. Little did Satan think, that his telling that lie to our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods," would be the occasion of their being members of Christ the Son of God.

Again, Satan is made a means of his own confusion in this: — It was Satan's design, in tempting man to sin, to make man his captive and slave forever; to have plagued, and triumphed over him. And this very thing is a means to bring it about, that man instead of being his vassal should be his judge. The elect, instead of being his captives, to be forever tormented and triumphed over by him, shall sit as judges to sentence him to everlasting torment. It has been the means, that one in man's nature, should be his supreme Judge. It was man's nature that Satan so envied, and sought to make a prey of. But Jesus Christ at the last day shall come in man's nature. And the devils shall be all brought to stand trembling at his bar. And he shall judge, and condemn them, and execute the wrath of God upon them. And not only shall Christ in the human nature judge the devils, but all the saints shall judge them with Christ as assessors with

him in judgment. 1 Cor. 6:3, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”

Secondly, In another instance Satan is made a means of his own confusion, that is, in his procuring the death of Christ. Satan set himself to oppose Christ as soon as he appeared. — He sought, by all means, to procure his ruin. He set the Jews against him. He filled the minds of the scribes and Pharisees with the most bitter persecuting malice against Christ. He sought by all means to procure his death. And that he might be put to the most ignominious death. We read “that Satan entered into Judas, and tempted him to betray him,” Luke 22:3. And Christ speaks of his sufferings as being the effects of the power of darkness. Luke 22:53, “When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness.” — But Satan hereby overthrows his own kingdom. Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And this was the very thing that did it, *viz.* the blood and death of Christ. The cross was the devil’s own weapon. And with this weapon he was overthrown; as David cut off Goliath’s head with his own sword.

Christ thus making Satan a means of his own confusion was typified of old by Samson’s getting honey out of the carcass of the lion. There is more implied in Samson’s riddle, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness,” than ever the Philistines explained. It was verified by Christ in a far more glorious manner. God’s enemies and ours are taken in the pit which they themselves have dug. And their own soul is taken in the net which they have laid. Thus we have shown, in some measure, the wisdom of this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

SECTION VIII

The superiority of this wisdom to that of the angels.

THE wisdom of this contrivance appears to have been above the wisdom of the angels by the following things.

I. It appears that the angels did not fully comprehend the contrivance, till they saw it accomplished. They knew that man was to be redeemed, long

before Christ came into the world. But yet they did not fully comprehend it until they saw it. This is evident by the expression in the text. *That now might be known unto the principalities--the manifold wisdom of God. i.e.* Now the work is actually accomplished by Jesus Christ. Which implies that it was now new to them. — If they understood no more of it now, than they had all along, the apostle would never have expressed himself so. For he is speaking of it as a mystery, in a measure kept hid until now.

Now it is to be considered that the angels had four thousand years to contemplate this affair. And they did not want inclination and desire to understand and look into it, as the Scripture teaches us. They had also a great deal to put them upon an attentive contemplation of it. For when it was made known that God had such a design, it must appear a new and wonderful thing to them. They had seen their fellow-angels destroyed without mercy. And this redeeming of the fallen sinful creature was quite a new thing. It must needs be astonishing to them, when God had revealed this design of mercy to them presently after the fall. And had given an intimation of it, in saying, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." They knew that God had such a design. For they were, from the beginning, ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those that were the heirs of salvation. — They were present at the institution of the typical dispensation, that was so full of shadows of gospel-truth, Psa. 69:17.

The angels contemplating the contrivance of our redemption was typified by the posture of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, which was the lid of the ark. These emblems were made bending down towards the ark and mercy-seat. — This is what the apostle Peter is thought to have some reference to, 1 Pet. 1:12. Yet the angels, though for four thousand years they had been studying this contrivance, did not fully comprehend it till they saw it accomplished. This shows that the wisdom of it was far above theirs. For if they could not fully comprehend it after it had been revealed that there was such a design — and after much of it had already been made known in the Old Testament — how much less could they have found it out of themselves.

Consider for what end this wisdom of God was made known unto the angels, *viz.* that they might admire and prize it. It was made known to

them, that they might see how manifold, how great and glorious, it is; that they might see the unspeakable "depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God," as the apostle expresses it, Rom. 11:33. — It was manifested to them that they might see the glory of God in it, and how great and wonderful the mystery was. 1 Tim. 3:16, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels." Now if the wisdom of it were not far above their own understandings, this would not be shown them for the express purpose that they might admire and praise God for it.

2. It appears to be above the wisdom of the angels because they are still contemplating it, and endeavoring to see more and more of it. Indeed there is room for their faculties to employ themselves to all eternity. It is evident, from 1 Peter 1:12, that they are still employing themselves in endeavoring to see more and more of God's wisdom appearing in the work of redemption, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." They still desire to look into it, after they have seen it accomplished. They do not so perfectly comprehend all the wisdom that is to be seen in it. But they are contemplating, looking into it, that they may see more and more. But there will still be room enough in this work to employ the angelical understandings.

SECTION IX

The subject improved

I. HENCE we may learn the blindness of the world that the wisdom appearing the work of redemption is no more admired in it. God has revealed this his glorious design and contrivance to the world, sends forth his gospel, and causes it to be preached abroad, in order to declare to the world that his infinite wisdom has been engaged for man's salvation. But

how little is it regarded! There are some who have their eyes opened to behold the wondrous things of the gospel, who see the glory of God in, and admire the wisdom of it. But the greater part are wholly blind to it. They see nothing in all this that is any way glorious and wonderful. Though the angels account it worthy of their most engaged and deep contemplation; yet the greater part of men take little notice of it. It is all a dull story and dead letter to many of them. They cannot see anything in it above the wisdom of men. Yea, the gospel to many seems foolishness.

Though the light that shines in the world be so exceeding glorious, yet how few are there that do see it. The glory of God's wisdom in this work is surpassing the brightness of the sun. But so blind is the world that it sees nothing. It does not know that the Son of righteousness shines. Thus it has been in all ages, and wherever the gospel has been preached, ministers of the Word of God in all ages have had occasion to say, Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Thus the prophets were sent to many with that errand. Isa. 6:9, 10, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

When Christ that glorious prophet came, and more fully revealed the counsels of God concerning our redemption, how many were then blind! How much did Christ complain of them! How blind were the scribes and Pharisees, the most noted sect of men among the Jews for wisdom. They beheld no glory in that gospel which Christ preached unto them, which gave him occasion to call them fools and blind, Mat. 23:17. — So it was again in the apostles' times. In all places where they preached, some believed, and some believed not, Acts 28:24. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," chap. 13:48. "The election obtained, but the rest were blinded," Rom. 11:7. And so it is still in those places where the gospel is preached. There are a few who see the glory of the gospel. God has a small number whose eyes he opens, who are called out of darkness into marvelous light, and who have an understanding to see the wisdom and fitness of the way of life. But how many are there who sit under the

preaching of the gospel all their days, yet never see any divine wisdom or glory in it! To their dying day they are unaffected with it. When they hear it, they see nothing to attract their attention, much less excite any admiration. To preach the gospel to them will serve very well to lull them asleep, but produces very little other effect upon them. This shows the exceeding wickedness of the heart of man. How affecting the thought, that infinite wisdom should be set on work, so as to surprise the angels, and to entertain them from age to age: — and that to men, though so plainly set before them, it should appear foolishness! 1 Cor. 1:18, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."

II. This is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel. The gospel stands in no need of external evidences of its truth and divinity. It carries its own light and evidence with it. — There is that in its nature that sufficiently distinguishes it, to those who are spiritually enlightened, from all the effects of human invention. There are evident appearances of the divine perfections, the stamp of divine glory, of which this of the divine wisdom is not the least part.

There is as much in the gospel to show that it is no work of men, as there is in the sun in the firmament. As persons of mature reason who look upon the sun, and consider the nature of it, its wonderful height, its course, its brightness and heat, may know that it is no work of man. So, if the gospel be duly considered, if the true nature of it be seen, it may be known that it is no work of man, and that it must be form God. And if the *wisdom* appearing in the gospel be duly considered, it will be seen as much to excel all human wisdom, as the sun's light excels the light of fires of our own kindling. — The contrivance of our salvation is of such a nature that no one can rationally conclude that man had any hand in it. The nature of the contrivance is such, so out of the way of all human thoughts, so different from all human inventions, so much more sublime, excellent, and worthy, that it does not savor at all of the craft or subtlety of man. It savors of God only.

If any are ready to think man might have found out such a way of salvation for sinners — so honorable to God, to his holiness and authority — they do not well consider the scantiness of human understanding. Mankind were of a poor capacity for any such undertaking. For, till the

gospel enlightened the world, they had but miserable notions of what was honorable to God. They could have but poor notions of what way would be suitable to the divine perfections. For they were woefully in the dark about these divine perfections themselves, till the gospel came abroad in the world. They had strange notions about a Deity. Most of them thought there were many gods. “They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things,” Rom. 1:23. They attributed vices to God. Even the philosophers, their wisest men entertained but imperfect notions of the Supreme Being. How then should men find out a way so glorious and honorable to God, and agreeable to his perfection, who had no wisdom enough to get any tolerable notions of God, till the gospel was revealed to them. They groped in the dark. Their notions showed the infinite insufficiency of man’s blind understanding for any such undertaking, as the contriving of a way of salvation every way honorable to God, and suitable to the needs of a fallen creature.

But since the gospel has told what God’s counsels are, and how he has contrived a way for our salvation, men are ready to despise it, and foolishly to exalt their own understanding, and to imagine they could have found out as good a way themselves. When, alas! men, of themselves, had no notion of what was honorable to God, and suitable for a Divine Being. — They did not so much as think of the necessity of God’s law being answered, and justice satisfied. And if they had, how dreadfully would they have been puzzled to have found out the way how! Who would have thought of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, and that one should sustain the rights of the Godhead, and another should be the Mediator, and another should make application of redemption? Who would have thought of such a thing as three distinct persons, and yet but one God? All the same Being, and yet three persons! Who would have thought of this, in order to have found out a way for satisfying justice? Who would have thought of a way for answering the law that threatened eternal death, without the sinner’s suffering eternal death? And who would have thought of any such thing as a divine person *suffering the wrath of God*? And if they had who would have contrived a way *how* he should suffer, since the divine nature cannot suffer?

Who would have thought of any such thing as God becoming man, two natures and but one person? These things are exceedingly out of the way of human thought and contrivance. It is most unreasonable to think that the world, who, till the gospel enlightened them, were so blind about the nature of God and divine things, should contrive such a way that should prove thus to answer all ends, every way to suit what the case required, most glorious to God, and answerable to all man's necessities. Everything is so fully provided for, and no absurdity to be found in the whole affair, but all speaking forth the most perfect wisdom. That there should be no infringement upon holiness or justice, nothing dishonorable to the majesty of God, no encouragement to sin, all possible motives to holiness, all manner of happiness provided, and Satan so confounded and entirely overthrown. How truly wonderful!

And if we suppose that all this notwithstanding was the invention of men, whose invention should it be? Who should be pitched upon as the most likely to invent it? It was not the invention of the Jews. For they were the most bitter enemies to it. The wise men among them, when they first heard of it, conceived malice against it, till the apostles preached it to them. And it appeared a very foolish doctrine to the wise men among them. The doctrine of Christ crucified was not only to the Jews a stumbling-block, but also to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23. Besides, it was contrary to all their notions about a Deity, and they knew nothing about the fall of man, and the like, till the gospel revealed it to them.

It was not the invention of the apostles. For the apostles, of themselves, were no way capable of any such learned contrivance. They were poor fishermen and publicans, an obscure and illiterate sort of men, till they were extra-ordinarily taught. They were all surprised when they first heard of it. When they heard that Christ must die for sinners, they were offended at it. And it was a long while before they were brought fully to receive it.

There is but one way left. And that is, to suppose, that Christ was a mere man, a very subtle crafty man, and that he invented it all. But this is as unreasonable as the rest. For it would have been all against himself, to invent a way of salvation by his own crucifixion, a most tormenting and ignominious death.

III. How great a sin they are guilty of who despise and reject this way of salvation! When God has manifested such unsearchable riches of wisdom, when all the persons of the Trinity have as it were held a consultation from all eternity in providing a way of salvation for us sinful miserable worms — a way that should be sufficient and every way suitable for us — a way that should be in all things complete, whereby we might have not only full pardon of all our sins, and deliverance from hell, but also full blessedness in heaven forever, — How must God needs be provoked, when after all, men reject this way of salvation!

When salvation comes to be preached, and is offered to them in this way, when they are invited to accept of its benefits, and yet they despise and refuse it, they thus practically deny it to be a wise way, and call this wisdom of God foolishness. — How provoking it must be when such a poor creature as man shall rise up and find fault with that wisdom which is so far above the wisdom of angels! This is one thing wherein consists the heinousness of the sin of unbelief, that it implies a rejecting and despising of divine wisdom in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. — Unbelief finds fault with the wisdom of God in the choice of the person, for performing this work. It dislikes the person of Christ. It sees no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty wherefore it should desire him.

That person whom the wisdom of God looked upon as the fittest person of any, the *only* fit person, is despised and rejected by unbelief. — Men, through unbelief, find fault with the salvation itself that Christ has purchased. They do not like to be saved as Christ would save. They do not like to be made holy, and to have such a happiness as is to be had in God for a portion.

It may not be amiss here to mention two or three ways whereby persons are guilty of a provoking contempt of the wisdom of God in the way of salvation.

First, they are guilty of a provoking contempt, who live in a *careless neglect* of their salvation. They who are secure in their sins, and are not much concerned about either salvation or damnation. This is practically charging God with folly. — Its language is, that all is in vain, and to no

purpose, that God has contrived and consulted for our salvation, when there was no need of it. They are well enough as they are. They do not see any great necessity of a Savior. They like that state they are in, and do not much desire to be delivered out of it. — They do not thank him for all his consultation and contrivance, and think he might have spared his cost. God has greatly minded that, which they do not think worth minding, and has contrived abundantly for that which they do not trouble their heads about.

Second, they are guilty of provoking contempt of the wisdom of this way of salvation, who go about to *contrive ways of their own*. They who are not content with salvation by the righteousness of Christ, which God has provided, are for contriving some way of being saved by their own righteousness. — These find fault with the wisdom of God's way, and set up their own wisdom in opposition to it. How greatly must God be provoked by such conduct!

Third, those that entertain discouraged and *despairing apprehension* about their salvation cast contempt on the wisdom of God. They think that because they have been such great sinners, God will not be willing to pardon them [and] Christ will not be willing to accept of them. They fear that Christ, in the invitations of the gospel, does not mean such wicked creatures as they are; that because they have committed so much sin, they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. They think it is in vain for them to seek for salvation, as though it were not all-sufficient: — as though the wisdom of God had not found out a way that was sufficient for the salvation of great sinners.

SECTION X

The misery of unbelievers

UNBELIEVERS have no portion in this matter. There is a most glorious way of salvation, but you, who are unbelievers, have no interest in it. The wisdom of God has been gloriously employed for the deliverance of men from a miserable, doleful state. But you are never the better for it,

because you reject it. If you continue in that state, this wisdom will do you no good.

Christ is a glorious person, every way fit to be a Savior of sinners, a person who has power sufficient, wisdom sufficient, merit sufficient, and love sufficient for perfecting this work. And he is the *only* fit person. But you have no right in him. You can lay claim to no benefit by his power, wisdom, love, or merits. — This wisdom of God has found out a way whereby this Savior might satisfy justice, and fulfill the law for us. But you have no lot in the incarnation, death, and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of God has contrived a way of salvation that there should be procured for us perfect and everlasting happiness. Here is a most glorious portion, *viz.* the Divine Being himself, with his glorious perfections. Here it is purchased, that we should see God face to face — that we should converse and dwell with God in his own glorious habitation — that we should be the children of God, and be conformed to him. — Here we have prepared all needed good, both for the souls and bodies of sinners, all needed earthly good things while here, and glory for both body and soul hereafter forever.

But you are never the better for all this. You have no lot nor portion in any of it. Notwithstanding all this rich provision, you remain in the same miserable state and condition, in which you came into the world. Though the provision of the gospel be so full, yet your poor soul remains in a famishing, perishing state. You remain dead in trespasses and sins, under the dominion of Satan, in a condemned state, having the wrath of God abiding on you, and being daily exposed to the dreadful effects of it in hell. Notwithstanding all this provision, you remain wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked. O that you might turn to God through Jesus Christ, be numbered among his disciples and faithful followers, and so be entitled to their privileges! They have an interest in this glorious Savior, and are entitled to all the ineffable blessedness of his kingdom, so far as their capacities will admit. But you remain without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no well-grounded hope, and without God in the world. — Further consider a few things.

I. It argues the *great misery* of sinners that the wisdom of God should be exercised to such a degree in order to find out a way to deliver them from it. Their case surely was most deplorable, since it required infinite wisdom to find out a way for their deliverance. The wisdom of angels was not sufficient. Nothing but divine wisdom could reach and remedy their case. And all the persons of the Trinity did enter into a consultation about it. If man's misery were not very great, divine wisdom would not have been exercised for his deliverance from it. God would not contrive and do things so wonderful in a trivial affair. If the salvation of a sinner were not a great salvation, from an exceeding great misery, it is not to be supposed, that God's wisdom should be more signalized in this affair than in any other whatever.

But so it is, this contrivance seems to be spoken of in Scripture as the master-piece of divine wisdom. This work of redemption is represented as most wonderful, and spoken of in Scripture in the most exalted manner of any work of God. — Doubtless therefore salvation is a great thing. And consequently the misery that sinners are saved from is a great and unspeakable misery. Now this is the misery that you are all in, who remain in a natural condition. This is the condemnation you lie under. This is the wrath of God that abides upon you. The wisdom of God knew it to be a very doleful thing for a person to be in a natural state, and therefore did so exercise itself to deliver miserable sinners out of it. But this is the state that many among us do yet remain in.

II. Consider, that if you continue in the state you are in, you will be so far from being the better for this contrivance, that you will be much *more miserable* for it. The justice and wisdom of the way of salvation will be your condemnation. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light," John 3:19. If you continue in the state that you are now in, it would have been better for you, if Christ had never died for sinners, if God had left all mankind to perish, as he did the fallen angels. Your punishment then would have been light in comparison of what it will be now. You will have greater sins by far to answer for; and all your sins will be abundantly the more aggravated.

Since I have been upon this subject, I have observed that the work of

redemption is an occasion of the elect being brought to greater happiness than man could have had, if he had not fallen. And it is also true as to reprobates, that it will be an occasion of their having greater misery that they would have had, if there had been no redemption. 2 Cor. 2:15, “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the other we are a savour of life unto life.” If you perish at last, you will be the more miserable for the benefits of the gospel being so glorious, and that because your crime in rejecting and despising them will be the more heinous. Heb. 2:3, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.”

III. Whilst you continue an unbeliever, *the more you hear* of this way of salvation, your condition will become the more miserable. The longer you sit under the preaching of the gospel, the more doleful does you case grow. Your guilt continually increases. For your refusal of the gospel, and your rejections of this way of salvation, are so much the oftener repeated. Every time you hear the gospel preached, you are guilty of renewed rejection of it, the guilt of which therefore you will have lying upon you. And the more you hear of the suitableness and glory of this way, the greater is your guilt who still continue to reject it. Every new illustration of the wisdom and grace of God in redemption adds to you guilt. Mat. 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem — how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" — What adds to your misery is, that as long as it continues, it is a growing evil.

IV.Consider the danger there is, that you will never have any lot or portion in this matter, seeing there are but few that have. Christ has told us that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. There have been but few in all ages of the world. Many seek, and many hope that they shall obtain. There are but few that intend to be damned, while many hope that they shall some way or other find means to escape eternal misery. But after all, there are but few saved, or obtain the benefits of redemption.

SECTION XI

Exhortation to come to Christ

I CONCLUDE with an use of exhortation to come to Christ, and accept of salvation in this way. You are invited to come to Christ, heartily to close with him, and trust in him for salvation. And if you do so, you shall have the benefit of all, as much as if the whole had been contrived for you alone. God has already contrived everything that is needful for your salvation. And there is nothing wanting but your consent. Since God has taken this matter of the redemption of sinners into his own hand, he has made thorough work of it. He has not left it for you to finish. Satisfaction is already made, righteousness is already wrought out, death and hell are already conquered. The Redeemer has already taken possession of glory, and keeps it in his hands to bestow on them who come to him. There were many difficulties in the way, but they are all removed. The Savior has already triumphed over all, and is at the right hand of God, to give eternal life to his people.

Salvation is ready brought to your door and the Savior stands, knocks, and calls that you would open to him, that he might bring it in to you. There remains nothing but your consent. All the difficulty now remaining is with your own heart. If you perish now, it must be wholly at your door. It must be because you would not come to Christ that you might have life, and because you virtually choose death rather than life. Pro. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." — All that is now required of you is that your heart should close with Christ as a Savior. Here consider,

I. That the wisdom of God has so contrived, that he has forestalled all your *objections*. If you make objections against Christ and the way of salvation, they must be all unreasonable. You cannot reasonably object that your sins are of such a nature, that God's honor will not allow of your pardon. It is true God insists upon his own honor. He is a God that will be honored, and his majesty shall be vindicated. And when sinners cast contempt upon him, his honor may be repaired by the punishment of sin without the sinner's suffering, how great soever the sin be. Herein the wisdom of this way appears, that there is a sufficiency for the greatest and most heinous transgressors.

You cannot object that God the Father will not be willing to accept you, for the Mediator's sake, for he has chosen his own Son to be a mediator, to cut off any such objections. So you may be sure that God will receive you if you go to him, through Christ. — You cannot object that God the Father has not given sufficient assurance of salvation to believers. For the principal things, those which would have been most difficult to believe, are already fulfilled. God has already given his Son to die for us. This, before it was accomplished, was much more strange, and difficult to believe, than that he should give eternal life to sinners after Christ died for them. Rom. 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things."

There is no room to doubt but that if we accept of Christ, God will give eternal life. For he has given it already into the hands of our Savior for us. He has entrusted him with the whole affair. He has given all things into his hands, that he might give eternal life to as many as should come to him. The Father has appointed him who died for believers, to be their judge, to have the whole determination of the matter, and the disposal of the reward, in his own hand. And you cannot doubt but that Christ will be willing to bestow eternal life on them for whom he purchased it. For if he is not willing to bestow it, surely he never would have died to purchase it. Who can think that Christ would be so desirous of sinners being saved, as to undergo so much for it, and not be willing to let them have it, when he had obtained it for them. — Consider,

II. The wisdom of God has contrived that there should be in the *person* of the Savior all manner of attractives to draw us to him. He has in him all possible excellency. He is possessed of all the beauty and glory of the God-head. — So that there can be no manner of excellency, nor degree of excellency that we can devise, but what is in the person of the Savior. — But yet so redundant has the wisdom of God been, in providing attractives in order that we should come to Christ, it has so ordered that there should also be all human excellencies in him. If there be anything attractive in this consideration, that Christ is one in our own nature, one of us, this is true of Christ. He is not only in the divine, but in the human nature. He is truly a man, and has all possible human excellencies. He was of a most excellent spirit, wise and holy, condescending and meek,

and of a lowly, benign, and benevolent disposition. Again,

The wisdom of God has chosen a person of great love to sinners, and who should show that love in the most endearing manner possible. What more *condescending* love can there be, than the love of a divine person to such worms in the dust? What *greater* love can there be, than dying love? And what more endearing *expression* of love, than dying for the beloved? And the wisdom of God has so contrived, that Christ shall sustain that office which should most tend to endear him to us, and draw us to him: the office of a redeemer, a redeemer from eternal misery, and the purchaser of all happiness.

And if all this be not enough to draw us, the wisdom of God has ordered more. It has provided us a Savior that should offer himself to us in the most endearing relation. He offers to receive us as friends. To receive us to an union to himself, to become our spiritual husband and portion forever. — And the wisdom of God has provided us a Savior that woos in a manner that has the greatest tendency to win our hearts. His word is most attractive. He stands at our door and knocks. He does not merely command us to receive him, but he condescends to apply himself to us in a more endearing manner. He entreats and beseeches us in his word and by his messengers.

III. The wisdom of God has contrived that there should be all manner of attractives in the *benefits* that Christ offers you. There are not only the excellencies of the person of Christ to draw you to him, but the desirable benefits he offers. Here is what is most suitable to the cravings of the human nature. Men when distressed and burdened, long for ease and *rest*. Here it is offered to us in Christ. “Come unto me”, says he, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest.” — Men when in fear of danger, long for *safety*. Here it is provided for us in Christ. God promises that he will become a shield and buckler, a strong rock and high tower to those that trust in him. — Those that mourn need *comfort*. Christ tells us that “he came to comfort those that mourn,” Isa. 61:2. — The blind need to have their eyes opened. The light is sweet to men. Christ offers to anoint our eyes with eye salve that we may see glorious light. He will be our sun, and the light of God’s countenance. — What is more dear to men than *life*? Christ has purchased for men, that they

should live forever. Psa. 21:4, “He asked life of thee and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.” — How greatly is a crown prized and admired by the children of men! And Christ offers this — not a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible and far more glorious crown than any worn by earthly kings; a crown of glory, the luster of which shall never fade, nor decay; with an everlasting kingdom. — Do men love *pleasures*? Here are pleasures forevermore. What could there be more to draw our hearts to Jesus Christ, and to make us willing to accept of him for our Savior, with all his unspeakable benefits?

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Ruth's Resolutions

"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest,
I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." -- **Ruth 1:16**

Subject: When those that we have formerly been conversant with, are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, it ought to be our firm resolution, that we will not leave them.

The historical things in this book of Ruth, seem to be inserted in the canon of the Scripture, especially on two accounts:

First, because Christ was of Ruth’s posterity. The Holy Ghost thought fit to take particular notice of that marriage of Boaz with Ruth, whence sprang the Savior of the world. We may often observe it, that the Holy Spirit who indited the Scriptures, often takes notice of little things, or minute occurrences, that do but remotely relate to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, because this history seems to be typical of the calling of the Gentile church, and indeed of the conversion of every believer. Ruth was

not originally of Israel, but was a Moabitess, and alien from the commonwealth of Israel, but she forsook her own people, and the idols of the Gentiles, to worship the God of Israel, and to join herself to that people. Herein she seems to be a type of the Gentile church, and also of every sincere convert. Ruth was the remote mother of Christ. He came of her posterity. So the church is Christ's mother, as she is represented, Rev. 12 at the beginning. And so also is every true Christian his mother. Mat. 12:50, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Christ is what the soul is in travail with, at the new birth. Ruth forsook all her natural relations, and her own country, the land of her nativity, and all her former possessions there, for the sake of the God of Israel, as every true Christian forsakes all for Christ. Psa. 45:10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Naomi was now returning out of the land of Moab, into the land of Israel, with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, who will represent to us two sorts of professors of religion. Orpah [represents] those who indeed make a fair profession, and seem to set out well, but continue only for a while, and then turn back. Ruth [represents] those who are sound and sincere, and therefore are stedfast and perservering in their way. Naomi, in the preceding verses, represents to her daughters the difficulties of their leaving their own country to go with her. And in this verse may be observed,

1.The remarkable conduct and behavior of Ruth on this occasion: with what inflexible resolution she cleaves to Naomi, and follows her. When Naomi first arose to return from the country of Moab into the land of Israel, Orpah and Ruth both set out with her, and Naomi exhorts them both to return. And both wept, and seemed as if they could not bear the thoughts of leaving her, and appeared as if they were resolved to go with her. Verse 10, "And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." Then Naomi says to them again, "Turn again, my daughters, go your way," etc. And then they were greatly affected again, and Orpah returned and went back. Now Ruth's stedfastness in her purpose had a greater trial, but yet is not overcome: "She clave unto her," verse 14. Then Naomi speaks to her again, verse 15, "Behold, thy sister-in-

law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." And then she shows her immovable resolution in the text and following verse.

2. I would particularly observe that wherein the virtuousness of this her resolution consists, *viz.* that it was for the sake of the God of Israel, and that she might be one of his people, that she was thus resolved to cleave to Naomi: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." It was for God's sake that she did thus, and therefore her so doing is afterwards spoken of as a virtuous behavior in her, Ruth 2:11,12, "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou has left thy father, and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou are come to trust." She left her father and mother, and the land of her nativity, to come and trust under the shadow of God's wings, and she had indeed a full reward given her, as Boaz wished. For besides immediate spiritual blessings to her own soul, and eternal rewards in another world, she was rewarded with plentiful and prosperous outward circumstances in the family of Boaz. And God raised up David and Solomon of her seed, and established the crown of Israel (the people that she chose before her own people) in her posterity; and, which is much more, of her seed he raised up Jesus Christ, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

From the words thus opened, I observe this for the subject of my present discourse: — "When those that we have formerly been conversant with, are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, it ought to be our firm resolution, that we will not leave them, but that their people shall be our people, and their God our God."

It sometimes happens, that of those who have been conversant one with another — who have dwelt together as neighbors, and have been often together as companions, or united in their relation, and have been together in darkness, bondage, and misery, in the service of Satan — some are enlightened, and have their minds changed, are made to see the great evil of sin, and have their hearts turned to God. They are influenced

by the Holy Spirit of God, to leave their company that are on Satan's side, and to join themselves with that blessed company that are with Jesus Christ. They are made willing to forsake the tents of wickedness, to dwell in the land of uprightness with the people of God.

And sometimes this proves a final parting or separation between them and those with whom they have been formerly conversant. Though it may be no parting in outward respects, they may still dwell, and converse one with another. Yet in other respects, it sets them at a great distance. One is a child of God, and the other his enemy. One is in a miserable, and the other in a happy, condition. One is a citizen of the heavenly Zion, the other is under condemnation to hell. They are no longer together in those respects wherein they used to be together. They used to be of one mind to serve sin, and do Satan's work, now they are of contrary minds. They used to be together in worldliness and sinful vanity, now they are of exceeding different dispositions. They are separated as they are in different kingdoms. The one remains in the kingdom of darkness, the other is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And sometimes they are finally separated in these respects: while one dwells in the land of Israel, and in the house of God, the other, like Orpah, lives and dies in the land of Moab.

Now it is lamentable, it is awful being parted so. It is doleful, when of those who have formerly been together in sin, some turn to God, and join themselves with his people, that it should prove a *parting* between them and their former companions and acquaintance. It should be our firm and inflexible resolution in such a case, that it shall be no parting, but that we will follow them, that their people shall be our people, and their God our God, and that for the following reasons:

I. .Because their *God* is a glorious God. There is none like him, who is infinite in glory and excellency. He is the most high God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His name is excellent in all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens. Among the gods there is none like unto him. There is none in heaven to be compared to him, nor are there any among the sons of the mighty that can be likened unto him. Their God is the fountain of all good, and an inexhaustible fountain. He is an all-sufficient God, able to protect and defend them, and do all things

for them. He is the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle: a strong rock, and a high tower. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth on the heaven in their help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are everlasting arms. He is a God who has all things in his hands, and does whatsoever he pleases. He killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; he maketh poor and maketh rich: the pillars of the earth are the Lord's. Their God is an infinitely holy God. There is none holy as the Lord. And he is infinitely good and merciful. Many that others worship and serve as gods, are cruel beings, spirits that seek the ruin of souls, but this is a God that delighteth in mercy. His grace is infinite, and endures forever. He is love itself, and infinite fountain and ocean of it.

Such a God is their God! Such is the excellency of Jacob! Such is the God of them who have forsaken their sins and are converted! They have made a wise choice who have chosen this for their God. They have made a happy exchange indeed, that have exchanged sin, and the world, for such a God!

They have an excellent and glorious Savior, who is the only-begotten Son of God: the brightness of his Father's glory. One in whom God from eternity had infinite delight; a Savior of infinite love; one that has shed his own blood, and made his soul an offering for their sins, and one that is able to save them to the uttermost.

II. Their *people* are an excellent and happy people. God has renewed them, and stamped his own image upon them, and made them partakers of his holiness. They are more excellent than their neighbors, Pro. 12:26. Yea, they are the excellent of the earth, Psa. 16:3. They are lovely in the sight of the angels, and they have their souls adorned with those graces that in the sight of God himself are of great price.

The people of God are the most excellent and happy society in the world. That God whom they have chosen for their God, is their Father. He has pardoned all their sins, and they are at peace with him, and he has admitted them to all the privileges of his children. As they have devoted themselves to God, so he has given himself to them. He is become their

salvation, and their portion: his power and mercy, and all his attributes are theirs. They are in a safe state, free from all possibility of perishing. Satan has no power to destroy them. God carries them on eagle's wings, far above Satan's reach, and above the reach of all the enemies of their souls. God is with them in this world. They have his gracious presence. God is for them: who then can be against them? As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about them. God is their shield, and their exceeding great reward, and their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. They have the divine promise and oath, that in the world to come they shall dwell forever in the glorious presence of God.

It may well be sufficient to induce us to resolve to cleave to those that forsake their sins and idols to join themselves with this people, that God is with them, Zec. 8:23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." So should persons, as it were, take hold of the skirt of their neighbors and companions that have turned to God, and resolve that they will go with them, because God is with them.

III. *Happiness* is no where else to be had, but in their God, and with their people. There are that are called gods many, and lords many. Some make gods of their pleasures; some choose Mammon for their god; some make gods of their supposed excellencies, or the outward advantages they have above their neighbors; some choose one thing for their god, and other another. But men can be happy in no other but the God of Israel. He is the only fountain of happiness. Other gods cannot help in calamity. Nor can any of them afford what the poor empty soul stands in need of. Let men adore those other gods never so much, and call upon them never so earnestly, and serve them never so diligently. They will nevertheless remain poor, wretched, unsatisfied, undone creatures. All other people are miserable, but that people whose God is the Lord. — The world is divided into two societies: *the people of God,* the little flock of Jesus Christ, that company that we read of, Rev. 14:4, "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these are they which

follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb:" and, *those that belong to the kingdom of darkness,* that are without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. All that are of this latter company are wretched and undone. They are the enemies of God, and under his wrath and condemnation. They are the devil's slaves, that serve him blindfold, and are befooled and ensnared by him, and hurried along in the broad way to eternal perdition.

IV. When those that we have formerly been conversant with are turning to God and to his people, their *example* ought to influence us. Their example should be looked upon as the call of God to us, to do as they have done. God, when he changes the heart of one, calls upon another, especially does he loudly call on those that have been their friends and acquaintance. We have been influenced by their examples in evil, and shall we cease to follow them, when they make the wisest choice that ever they made, and do the best thing that ever they did? If we have been companions with them in worldliness, in vanity, in unprofitable and sinful conversation, it will be a hard case, if there must be a parting now, because we are not willing to be companions with them in holiness and true happiness. Men are greatly influenced by seeing one another's prosperity in other things. If those whom they have been much conversant with, grow rich, and obtain any great earthly advantages, it awakens their ambition, and eager desire after the like prosperity. How much more should they be influenced, and stirred up to follow them, and be like them, when they obtain that spiritual and eternal happiness, that is of infinitely more worth, than all the prosperity and glory of this world!

V. Our *resolutions* to cleave to and follow those that are turning to God, and joining themselves to his people, ought to be *fixed* and strong, because of the great difficulty of it. If we will cleave to them, and have their God for our God, and their people for our people, we must mortify and deny all our lusts, and cross every evil appetite and inclination, and forever part with all sin. But our lusts are many and violent. Sin is naturally exceeding dear to us. To part with it is compared to plucking out our right eyes. Men may refrain from wonted ways of sin for a little while,

and may deny their lusts in a partial degree, with less difficulty; but it is heart-rending work, finally to part with all sin, and to give our dearest lusts a bill of divorce, utterly to send them away. But this we must do, if we would follow those that are truly turning to God. Yea, we must not only forsake sin, but must, in a sense, forsake all the world, Luke 14:33, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." That is, he must forsake all in his heart, and must come to a thorough disposition and readiness actually to quit all for God, and the glorious spiritual privileges of his people, whenever the case may require it, and that without any prospect of anything of the like nature, or any worldly thing whatsoever, to make amends for it — all to go into a strange country, a land that has hitherto been unseen, like Abraham, who being called of god, "went out of his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, for a land that God should show him, not knowing whither he went."

Thus, it was a hard thing for Ruth to forsake her native country, her father and mother, her kindred and acquaintance, and all the pleasant things she had in the land of Moab, to dwell in the land of Israel, where she never had been. Naomi told her of the difficulties once and again. They were too hard for her sister Orpah. The consideration of them turned her back after she was set out. Her resolution was not firm enough to overcome them. But so firmly resolved was Ruth, that she brake through all. She was stedfast in it, that let the difficulty be what it would, she would not leave her mother-in-law. So persons had need to be very firm in their resolution to conquer the difficulties that are in the way of cleaving to them who are indeed turning from sin to God.

Our cleaving to them, and having their God for our God, and their people for our people, depends on our resolution and choice, and that in two respects.

1.The firmness of resolution in using means in order to it, is the way to have means effectual. There are means appointed in order to our becoming some of the true Israel, and having their God for our God. The thorough use of these means is the way to have success, but not a slack or slighty use of them. And that we may be thorough, there is need of strength of resolution, a firm and inflexible disposition and bent of mind

to be universal in the use of means, and to do what we do with our might, and to persevere in it. Mat. 11:12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. A choosing of their God, and their people, with a full determination, and with the whole soul, is the condition of an union with them. God gives every man his choice in this matter: as Orpah and Ruth had their choice, whether they would go with Naomi into the land of Israel, or stay in the land of Moab. A natural man may choose deliverance from hell, but no man does ever heartily choose God and Christ, and the spiritual benefits that Christ has purchased, and the happiness of God's people, till he is converted. On the contrary, he is averse to them. He has no relish of them; and is wholly ignorant of their inestimable worth and value.

Many carnal men seem to choose these things, but do it not really, as Orpah seemed at first to choose to forsake Moab to go into the land of Israel. But when Naomi came to set before her the difficulty of it, she went back, and thereby showed that she was not fully determined in her choice, and that her whole soul was not in it as Ruth's was.

APPLICATION

The use that I shall make of what has been said, is to move sinners to this resolution, with respect to those amongst us that have lately turned to God, and joined themselves to the flock of Christ. Through the abundant mercy and grace of God to us in this place, it may be said of many of you that are in a Christless condition, that you have lately been left by those that were formerly with you in such a state. Some of those with whom you have formerly been conversant, have lately forsaken a life of sin and the service of Satan, and have turned to God, and fled to Christ, and joined themselves to that blessed company that are with him. They formerly were with you in sin and in misery, but now they are with you no more in that state or manner of life. They are changed, and have fled from wrath to come. They have chosen a life of holiness here, and the enjoyment of God hereafter. They were formerly your associates in bondage, and were with you in Satan's business, but now you have their company no longer in these things. Many of you have seen those you live with, under the same roof, turning from being any longer with you in sin, to be with the

people of Jesus Christ. Some of you that are husbands, have had your wives; some of you that are wives, have had your husbands; some of you that are children, have had your parents; and parents have had your children; many of you have had your brothers and sisters; and many your near neighbors, and acquaintance and special friends; many of you that are young have had your companions: I say, many of you have had those that you have been thus concerned with, leaving you, forsaking that doleful life and wretched state in which you still continue. God, of his good pleasure and wonderful grace, has lately caused in this place multitudes to forsake their old abodes in the land of Moab, and under the gods of Moab, and go into the land of Israel, to put their trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. Though you and they have been nearly related, and have dwelt together, or have been often together and intimately acquainted, they have been taken, and you hitherto left! O let it not be the foundation of a final parting! But earnestly follow them. Be firm in your resolution in this matter. Do not as Orpah did, who though at first she made as though she would follow Naomi, yet when she had the difficulty set before her, went back. But say as Ruth, "I will not leave thee; but where thou goest, I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Say as she said, and do as she did. Consider the excellency of their God, and their Savior, and the happiness of their people, the blessed state that they are in, and the doleful state you are in.

You are *old* sinners, who have lived long in the service of Satan, have lately seen some that have traveled with you in the paths of sin these many years, turning to God. They with you enjoyed great means and advantages, had calls and warnings with you, and with you passed through remarkable times of the pouring out of God's Spirit in this place, and hardened their hearts and stood it out with you, and with you have grown old in sin. Yet you have seen some of them turning to God, *i.e.* you have seen those evidences of it in them, whence you may rationally judge that it is so. O! let it not be a final parting! You have been thus long together in sin, and under condemnation. Let it be your firm resolution, that if possible, you will be with them still, now they are in a holy and happy state, and that you will follow them into the holy and pleasant land. — You that tell of your having been seeking salvation for many years (though, without doubt, in a poor dull way, in comparison of what you

ought to have done), have seen some old sinners and old seekers, as you are, obtaining mercy. God has lately roused them from their dullness, and caused them to alter their hand, and put them on more thorough endeavors. They have now, after so long a time, heard God's voice, and have fled for refuge to the rock of ages. Let this awaken earnestness and resolution in you. Resolve that you will not leave them.

You who are in your *youth* how many have you seen of your age and standing, that have of late hopefully chosen God for their God, and Christ for their Savior! You have followed them in sin, and have perhaps followed them into vain company. Will you not now follow them to Christ? — And you who are *children,* know that there have lately been some of your sort who have repented of their sins, loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusted in him, and are become God's children, as we have reason to hope. Let it stir you up to resolve to your utmost to seek and cry to God, that you may have the like change made in your hearts, that their people may be your people, and their God your God.

You who are great sinners, who have made yourselves distinguishingly guilty by the wicked practices you have lived in, know that there are some of your sort who have lately (as we have reason to hope) had their hearts broken for sin, and have forsaken it, and trusted in the blood of Christ for the pardon of it. They have chosen a holy life, and have betaken themselves to the ways of wisdom: let it excite and encourage you resolutely to cleave to them, and earnestly to follow them.

Let the following things be considered:

1. That your soul is as precious as theirs. It is immortal as theirs is, and stands in as much need of happiness, and can as ill bear eternal misery. You was born in the same miserable condition that they were, having the same wrath of God abiding on you. You must stand before the same Judge, who will be as strict in judgment with you as with them. Your own righteousness will stand you in no more stead before him than theirs, and therefore you stand in as absolute necessity of a Savior as they. Carnal confidences can no more answer your end than theirs, nor can this world or its enjoyments serve to make you happy without God and Christ more than them. When the bridegroom comes, the foolish virgins stand in as

much need of oil as the wise, Mat. 25 at the beginning.

2. Unless you follow them in their turning to God, their conversion will be a foundation of an eternal separation between you and them. You will be in different interests, and in exceeding different states, as long as you live. They the children of God, and you the children of Satan, and you will be parted in another world; when you come to die, there will be a vast separation made between you. Luke 16:26, "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." And you will be parted at the day of judgment. You will be parted at Christ's first appearance in the clouds of heaven. While they are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, to be ever with the Lord, you will remain below, confined to this cursed ground, that is kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. You will appear separated from them, while you stand before the great judgment-seat, they being at the right hand, while you are set at the left. Mat. 25:32, 33, "And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And you shall then appear in exceeding different circumstances: while you stand with devils, in the image and deformity of devils, and in ineffable horror and amazement, they shall appear in glory, sitting on thrones, as assessors with Christ, and as such passing judgment upon you, 1 Cor. 6:2. And what shame and confusion will then cover you, when so many of your contemporaries, your equals, your neighbors, relations, and companions, shall be honored, and openly acknowledged, and confessed by the glorious Judge of the universe, and Redeemer of saints, and shall be seen by you sitting with him in such glory. You shall appear to have neglected your salvation, and not to have improved your opportunities, and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, the same person that will then appear as your great Judge, and you shall be the subjects of wrath, and as it were, trodden down in eternal contempt and disgrace. Dan. 12:2, "Some shall rise to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And what a wide separation will the sentence then passed and executed make between you and them! When you shall be sent away out of the presence of the Judge with indignation and

abhorrence, as cursed and loathsome creatures they shall be sweetly accosted and invited into his glory as his dear friends, and the blessed of his Father! When *you,* with all that vast throng of wicked and accursed men and devils, shall descend with loud lamentings and horrid shrieks, into that dreadful gulf of fire and brimstone, and shall be swallowed up in that great and everlasting furnace, *they* shall joyfully, and with sweet songs of glory and praise, ascend with Christ, and all that beauteous and blessed company of saints and angels, into eternal felicity, in the glorious presence of God, and the sweet embraces of his love. You and they shall spend eternity in such a separation, and immensely different circumstances! You have been intimately acquainted and nearly related, closely united and mutually conversant in this world, and you have taken delight in each other's company! And shall it be — after you have been together a great while, each of you in undoing yourselves, enhancing your guilt, and heaping up wrath — that their so wisely changing their minds and their course, and choosing such happiness for themselves, should now at length be the beginning of such an exceeding and everlasting separation between you and them? How awful will it be to be parted so!

3. Consider the great encouragement that God gives you, earnestly to strive for the same blessing that others have obtained. There is great encouragement in the Word of God to sinners to seek salvation, in the revelation we have of the abundant provision made for the salvation even of the chief of sinners, and in the appointment of so many means to be used with and by sinners, in order to their salvation, and by the blessing which God in his Word connects with the means of his appointment. There is hence great encouragement for all, at all times, that will be thorough in using of these means. But now God gives extraordinary encouragement in his providence, by pouring out his Spirit so remarkably amongst us, and bringing savingly home to himself all sorts, young and old, rich and poor, wise and unwise, sober and vicious, old self-righteous seekers, and profligate livers: no sort are exempt. There is at this day amongst us the loudest call, and the greatest encouragement, and the widest door opened to sinners, to escape out of a state of sin and condemnation, that perhaps God ever granted in New England. Who is there that has an immortal soul, so sottish as not to improve such an opportunity, and that will not bestir himself with all his might? How

unreasonable is negligence, and how exceeding unreasonable is negligence, and how exceeding unreasonable is discouragement, at such a day as this! Will you be so stupid as to neglect your soul now? Will any mortal amongst us be so unreasonable as to lag behind, or look back in discouragement, when God opens such a door? Let every person be thoroughly awake! Let everyone encourage himself now to press forward, and fly for his life!

4. Consider how earnestly desirous they that have obtained are that you should follow them, and that their people should be your people, and their God your God. They desire that you should partake of that great good which God has given them, and that unspeakable and eternal blessedness which he has promised them. They wish and long it. If you do not go with them, and are not still of their company, it will not be for want of their willingness, but your own. That of Moses to Hobab is the language of every true saint of your acquaintance to you. Num. 10:29, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." As Moses, when on his journey through the wilderness, following the pillar of cloud and fire, invited Hobab — with whom he had been acquainted in the land of Midian, where Moses had formerly dwelt with him — to go with him and his people to Canaan, to partake with them in the good that God had promised them, so do those of your friends and acquaintance invite you: out of a land of darkness and wickedness, where they have formerly been with you, to go with them to the heavenly Canaan. The company of saints, the true church of Christ, invite you. The lovely bride calls you to the marriage supper. She has authority to invite guests to her own wedding, and you ought to look on her invitation and desire, as the call of Christ the bridegroom. For it is the voice of his Spirit in her, Rev. 22:17, "The Spirit and bride say, Come." Where seems to be a reference to what has been said, chap. 19:7-9, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." It is with respect to this her marriage-supper that she, from the motion of the Spirit of the Lamb in her, says,

Come. So that you are invited on all hands. All conspire to call you, [and] God the Father invites you. This is the King who has made a marriage for his Son, and he sends forth his servants, the ministers of the gospel, to invite the guests. And the Son himself invites you: it is he that speaks, Rev. 22:17, "And let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come." He tells us who he is in the foregoing verse, "I Jesus, the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." And God's ministers invite you, and all the church invites you; and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God that hour that you accept the invitation.

5. Consider what a doleful company will be left after this extraordinary time of mercy is over. We have reason to think that there will be a number left. We read that when Ezekiel's healing waters increased so abundantly, and the healing effect of them was so very general. Yet there were certain places, where the waters came, that never were healed. Eze. 47:9-11, "And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed, and everything shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets: there fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt." And even in the apostles times, when there was such wonderful success of the gospel wherever they came, there were some that did not believe. Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." And chap. 28:24, "And some believed, and some believed not." So we have no reason to expect but there will be some left amongst us. It is to be hoped it will be but a small company, but what a doleful company will it be! How darkly and awfully will it look upon them! If you shall be of that company, how well may your friends and relations lament over you, and bemoan your dark and dangerous circumstances! If you would not be one of them, make haste, delay not, and look not behind you. Shall all sorts obtain, shall everyone press into the kingdom of God, while you stay

loitering behind in a doleful undone condition? Shall everyone take heaven, while you remain with no other portion but this world? Now take up that resolution, that if it be possible you will cleave to them that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. Count the cost of a thorough, violent, and perpetual pursuit of salvation, and forsake all, as Ruth forsook her own country, and all her pleasant enjoyments in it. Do not do as Orpah did; who set out, and then was discouraged, and went back. But hold out with Ruth through all discouragement and opposition. When you consider others that have chosen the better part, let that resolution be ever firm with you: “Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

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The Unreasonableness of Indetermination in Religion

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." -- 1 Kings 18:21

Subject: The unresolvedness of many persons in religion is very unreasonable.

It is the manner of God, before he bestows any signal mercy on the people, first to prepare them for it. And before he removes any awful judgments which he hath brought upon them for their sins, first to cause them to forsake those sins which procured those judgments. We have an instance of this in the context. — It was a time of sore famine in Israel. There had been neither rain nor dew for the space of three years and six months. This famine was brought upon the land for their idolatry. But God was now about to remove this judgment. And therefore, to prepare them for it, sends Elijah to convince them of the folly of idolatry, and to bring them to repentance for it. — In order to this, Elijah by the command of the Lord, goes and shows himself to Ahab, and directs him to send and gather all Israel to him at mount Carmel, and all the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves that ate at Jezebel's table, four hundred, that they might determine the matter and bring the controversy to an issue, whether Jehovah or Baal were God. To this end, Elijah proposes, that each should take a bullock, that he should take one, and the prophets of Baal another, that each should cut his bullock to pieces, lay it on the wood, and put no fire under [it]. And that the God who should answer by fire should be concluded to be God.

The text contains an account of what Elijah said to all the people at their first meeting, and of their silence. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." To which the people, it seems,

made no reply. In these words, we may observe:

I. How Elijah expostulates with the people about their halting so long between two opinions; in which expostulation may be observed:

First, what the two opinions were, between which they halted, viz. Whether the Lord were God, or whether Baal were God. The case in Israel seems to have been this: there were some who were altogether for Baal, and wholly rejected the true God; of which number, to be sure, were Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. And there were some among them who were altogether for the God of Israel, and wholly rejected Baal; as God told Elijah, that "he had yet left in Israel seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him," 1 Kin. 19:18.

But the rest of the people halted between two opinions. They saw that some were for one, and some for the other, and they did not know which to choose. And as is commonly the case when difference of opinion prevails, there were many who had no religion at all. They were not settled in anything. The different opinions prevalent in Israel distracted and confounded them. Many who professed to believe in the true God were yet very cold and indifferent. And many were wavering and unsettled. They saw that the king and queen were for Baal. And Baal's party was the prevailing party. But their forefathers had been for the Lord. And they knew not which were right. Thus they halted between two opinions.

Second, in this expostulation is implied the unreasonableness of their thus halting between two opinions. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Which implies that they ought to determine one way or the other.

II. We may observe their silence on this occasion, "And the people answered him not a word", as being convicted in their own consciences of the unreasonableness of their being for so long a time wavering and unresolved. They had nothing to reply in excuse for themselves.

DOCTRINE

Unresolvedness in religion is very unreasonable.

I. Prop. Many persons remain exceedingly undetermined with respect to religion. They are very much undetermined in themselves whether to embrace religion or to reject it. Many who are baptized, and make a profession of religion, and seem to be Christians, are yet in their own minds halting between two opinions. They never yet came fully to a conclusion whether to be Christians or not. They are taught the Christian religion in their childhood, and have the Bible, the word preached, and the means of grace, all their days. Yet [they] continue, and grow up, and many grow old, in an unresolvedness whether to embrace Christianity or not. And many continue unresolved as long as they live.

First, there are some persons who have never come to a settled determination in their own minds whether or [not] there be any truth in religion. They hear of the things of religion from their childhood all their days; but never come to a conclusion in their own minds whether they be real or fabulous. Particularly, some have never come to any determination in their own minds whether there be any such thing as conversion. They hear much talk about it, and know that many pretend to be the subjects of it. But they are never resolved whether all be not merely designed hypocrisy and imposture.

Some never come to any determination whether the Scriptures be the Word of God, or whether they be the invention of men; and whether the story concerning Jesus Christ be anything but a fable. They fear it is true, but sometimes very much doubt of it. Sometimes when they hear arguments for it, they assent that it is true. But upon every little objection or temptation arising, they call it in question; and are always wavering and never settled about it.

So it seems to have been with many of the Jews in Christ's time. They were always at a loss what to make of him, whether he were indeed the Christ, or whether he were Elias, or one of the old prophet, or a mere impostor. John 10:24, 25, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not." Some have never so much as come to a resolution in their own

minds, whether there be a God or not. They know not that there is, and oftentimes very much doubt of it.

Second, there are some who never have come to any determination in their own minds whether to embrace religion in the practice of it. Religion consists not merely, or chiefly, in theory or speculation, but in practice. It is a practical thing. The end of it is to guide and influence us in our practice. And considered in this view, there are multitudes who never have come to a conclusion whether to embrace religion or not. It is probably pretty general for men to design to be religious some time or other before they die; for none intend to go to hell. But they still keep it at a distance. They put it off from time to time, and never come to any conclusion which determines them in their present practice. And some never so much as fix upon any time. They design to be religious some time before they die, but they know not when.

There are many who have always continued unresolved about the necessity of striving and being earnestly engaged for salvation. They flatter themselves that they may obtain salvation, though they be not so earnestly engaged; though they mind the world and their worldly affairs more than their salvation. They are often told how necessary it is that they make haste and not delay, that they do whatever their hand findeth to do with their might, that a dull slack way of seeking salvation is never likely to be effectual. But of these things they are never thoroughly convinced. Some seem to resolve to be in earnest, and seem to set out with some engagedness of mind. But soon fail because they have never been fully convinced of its necessity.

Many have never come to a determination what to choose for their portion. There are but two things which God offers to mankind for their portion. One is this world, with the pleasures and profits of sin, together with eternal misery ensuing. The other is heaven and eternal glory, with a life of self-denial and respect to all the commands of God. Many, as long as they live, come to no settled determination which of these to choose. They must have one or the other. They cannot have both. But they always remain in suspense and never make their choice.

They would fain have heaven and this world too. They would have

salvation and the pleasures and profits of sin too. But considering heaven and the world, as God offers them, they will have neither. God offers heaven only with the self-denial and difficulty which are in the way to it. And they are not willing to have heaven on these conditions. God offers the world and the pleasures of sin to men not alone, but with eternal misery in connection with them. And so neither are they willing to have the world. They would fain divide heaven from the holiness and self-denial which are the way to it, and from the holiness which reigns in it, and then they would be glad to have heaven. They would fain divide sin from hell, and then they would fully determine forever to cleave to sin.

But God will not make such a division for them. They must have one or the other of these for their portion, as God offers. And therefore they never make any choice at all. — Indeed they do practically and in effect choose sin and hell. But they do not come to any resolution in their own minds which they will have for their portion, whether heaven and holiness, or the world and hell. They are always wavering and halting between two opinions. Sometimes they seem to determine for the one, and sometimes for the other. When they meet with no difficulty or temptation and can, as they say, do their duty without hurting themselves or much crossing their carnal inclinations, they seem to choose heaven and holiness. At other times, wherein they meet with difficulty in the way of duty, and great temptations of worldly profits or pleasures are laid before them, then they choose the world, and let heaven and holiness alone. — There are among us vast multitudes before whom these two things have been set hundreds of times, who have never to this day come to a determination which to have.

So they have never yet determined which shall be their master, whether God or mammon. There are but few who have undertaken the service of God, and are come to a resolution and preparedness of mind to serve God and follow Christ at all times, and to whatever difficulties it may expose them. Yet, at the same time, neither are they determined that they will continue to serve Satan. They are afraid to draw up such a conclusion. — Thus many spend their lives without making their choice, though they do in the mean time practically choose the service of Satan. These are the persons of whom the apostle James speaks in chap. 1:8. “The double-

minded man is unstable in all his ways."

II. To continue thus undetermined and unresolved in the things of religion, is very unreasonable, and that upon the following accounts:

First, in the things of religion we are to the highest degree interested. The truth or falsehood of the doctrines of religion concerns us to the highest degree possible. It is no matter of indifference to us whether there be a God or not; or whether the Scriptures be the Word of God; or whether Christ be the Son of God; or whether there be any such thing as conversion. It makes and infinite difference to us, whether these things be so or not. Therefore we are under the greatest obligation in point of interest to resolve in our minds whether they be true or false. They who are undetermined whether there be any truth in religion, and are contented to be so, not inquiring, nor thoroughly using the means to be determined, act very unreasonably. They remain in doubt whether there be any such thing as heaven or hell; are quiet and easy to continue ignorant in this matter; are not engaged in their minds to come to a determination; do not search and inquire what arguments there are to prove any such things; nor diligently weigh and consider the force of them. But [they] busy their minds about other things of infinitely less importance; and act as if they thought it did not much concern them whether there be a future and eternal state.

If they think that there is not, yet it is a matter of so great importance, that no wise man would rest until he had satisfied himself; because if there be such a future state as the Scriptures assert, then we must have our part in it, either in a state of eternal rewards, or in a state of eternal punishment. — So it is no matter of indifference to us what we have for our portion, whether this world with hell, or a life of holiness and self-denial with heaven. These opposite portions relate, not merely to a few days in this world, but to eternity. It is infinite madness therefore not to come to a determination.

So it is no matter of indifference what master we serve, whether God or mammon; or what interest we will pursue, whether our temporal or eternal interest; or which we prefer, the commands of God, or our pleasures, our ease, and convenience. We ought therefore to come to

some determination which we will choose.

Second, God hath made us reasonable creatures, and capable of rationally determining for ourselves. Doubtless God hath made man capable of discovering the truth in matters of religion, of coming to a good determination in these questions, whether the Scriptures be the Word of God, whether there be a future state, and the like. The resolution of these questions, which it so much concerns us to determine, is not about our capacities. God hath not set these things beyond the extent of our faculties.

God hath made us capable of making a wise choice for ourselves, as to the life we shall choose to lead. He hath given man so much understanding, as to make him capable of determining which is best; to lead a life of self-denial, and enjoy eternal happiness, or to take our swing in sinful enjoyments, and burn in hell forever. The question is of no difficult determination. — It is so far from being a matter too hard for our reason, that the reason of a child is sufficient to determine this matter. Therefore men in remaining undetermined in these matters, do not act as reasonable creatures, but make themselves like "the horse and the mule, which have no understanding," Psa. 32:9.

Third, God puts into our hands a happy opportunity to determine for ourselves. What better opportunity can a man desire to consult his own interest than to have liberty to choose his own portion? God sets life and death before us. Deu. 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed after thee may live." See also Eze. 18:31, 32, and chap. 33:11. What better opportunity can we desire for securing to ourselves the greatest good, than to have eternal life and unchangeable happiness set before us, and offered to our choice? Therefore those who neglect coming to a resolution, act unreasonably, because they stand so much in their own light, and neglect so glorious an opportunity.

Fourth, the things among which we are to make our choice are but few in number. There are but two portions set before us, one of which must be our portion; either life or death, either blessing or cursing; either a life of

universal and persevering obedience, with eternal glory, or a worldly, carnal, wicked life, with eternal misery. If there were many terms in the offer made us, many things of nearly and equal value, one of which we must choose, to remain long in suspense and undetermined would be more excusable. There would be more reason for long deliberation before we should fix. But there are only two terms, there are but two states in another world, in one or the other of which we must be fixed to all eternity.

And there are but two states in this world, a state of sin, and a state of holiness; a natural state, and a converted state. There is but one way in which we can come to life, which renders the determination of reason much the easier. There are but two masters, to one of which we must be reputed the servants, Baal and Jehovah, God and Mammon. There are but two competitors for the possession of us, Christ and the devil. — There are but two paths, in one of which you are to travel, either in the straight and narrow way which leadeth unto life, or the broad way which leadeth unto destruction.

This shows the unreasonableness of those who live under light, and have the offers of the gospel made to them, and yet remain from year to year unfixed and undetermined, halting between two opinions.

Fifth, God hath given us all needed helps to determine us. We have all needful helps to determine our understanding, as to the truth of the things of religion, as whether there be a God, whether the Scriptures be the Word of God, whether there be a future state, etc. We are not left in the dark as to these things, as the poor heathens are, who are under great disadvantages to come to the knowledge of the truth, though they be not under an impossibility, for "they may haply feel after God and find him," Acts 17:27. But we have a clear sunshine to guide us. We have a particular description of those things which are set before us for truth and have great opportunity to examine them. The Scripture lies open before us, and all the doctrines of the gospel are particularly set forth, with the reasons on which their evidence is founded. We may search and try their force and sufficiency, as we please.

We have great helps to a wise and rational determination in our choice; to

determine whether it be best for us to choose a life of sin or a life of holiness, the service of God or the service of Baal. We have very plainly set before us the advantages of both sides. The loss and gain are particularly stated. Christ hath dealt by us faithfully, and hath told us what we shall get and what we shall lose by being his followers. He hath also told us what we shall get and what we shall lose by a life of sin. He hath not dealt by us deceitfully. He hath not pretended greater advantages in godliness than there really are, nor greater disadvantages or dangers in sin. John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

He hath told us plainly that we must take up the cross daily and follow him; that we must hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and our own life also, in order to become his disciples; and that we must cut off our rights hands, and pluck out our right eyes, in order to enter into heaven. Thus we have a fair opportunity to count the costs on both sides, and are directed so to do, Luke 14:28. — How unreasonable therefore is it for men who have all these helps and advantages, to remain in suspense, and to come to no conclusion whether they will be Christians or heathens, whether they will be for God or the devil; though they have lived under the preaching of the word and offers of the gospel for many years.

Sixth, we have no reason to expect to be under better advantages to determine hereafter than we are now. We never shall have a clearer revelation of gospel truth. Never shall have the advantages and disadvantages of both sides more plainly set before us than they are already in the Word of God. Nor are we ever [likely] to be under better advantages to know what will be best for us, and most for our interest. Those therefore who delay, gain nothing by their delays, but give Satan more opportunity to darken their minds, to deceive them, and lead them astray in their choice. Therefore their delay of coming to a resolution is unreasonable.

Seventh, if they come not to a determination in this life, God will determine for them, and will appoint them their portion with the wicked. If sinners, by refusing to choose either life or death, either heaven or hell, could thereby avoid both, or if in this case the matter would remain

undetermined, till they should determine it; the folly and unreasonableness of delaying a determination would not be so great. But that is not the case. If they go on halting between two opinions, God will determine for them and that quickly. He will determine where their portion shall be, viz. among the unbelievers, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever. God will not wait upon them always, to see what they will choose. But he will put an issue to the matter by his unalterable sentence. — Therefore it becomes all, if they are afraid to have their lot assigned them in hell, to come soon to a determination.

Eighth, delay in this case is unreasonable, because those who delay know not how soon the opportunity of choosing for themselves will be past. The opportunity will last no longer than life. When once life is past, they will no more have the offer made them. The sentence will be past. The matter will be closed.

Those who delay their choice in this world will be glad to choose afterwards. Then they will not be at a loss which to choose; they will be able easily to determine. The judgments of sinners, after this life, are soon resolved, whether there be any truth in religion or not. They can soon determine which is most eligible; a life of obedience and self-denial, with heaven for a reward, or a life of irreligion and sin, with hell for a punishment. They no longer halt between two opinions. But it is too late. Their opportunity is past. They would give all the world for another opportunity to choose. They would then soon come to a determination. But it will not be granted them.

APPLICATION

I. Let this put everyone upon examining himself, whether or no he have ever yet come to a full determination in the affair of religion.

First, inquire whether you have yet come to a full determination with respect to the truth of the things of religion.

Have you ever been fully convinced? Is it a question which has been answered and determined with you, whether there be a future state. Or does it yet remain a question with you unresolved? Are you not yet to

seek whether there be any future state, and whether or no the story about Jesus Christ be any more than a fable? Here I desire you to note two things:

1. If the main reason why you assent to the truth of religion be that others believe so and you have been so instructed from your childhood, you are of those with whom the truth of religion yet remains undetermined. Tradition and education will never fix and settle the mind in a satisfactory and effectual belief of the truth. Though men, taking religion upon trust, may seem to give a full assent to the truth of religion, and not to call it in question; yet such a faith will not stand a shock. A temptation easily overthrows it. The reason of man in time of trial will not rest on so poor an evidence.

There are multitudes who seem to grant the truth of religion, with whom the main foundation of their faith is the tradition of their fathers, or the profession of their neighbors. And it is to be feared. It is so with many who count themselves good Christians. But as to all such persons as never have seen any other evidence to satisfy them, either of the truth or falsehood of religion, they only halt between two opinions. — The same may be said of those who are unstable in their disposition with regard to Christ or the things which he taught.

2. If you are fully come to a determination concerning the things of religion, that they are true, they will be of weight with you above all things in the world. If you be really convinced that these things are no fable, but reality, it is impossible but that you must be influenced by them above all things in the world. For these things are so great, and so infinitely exceed all temporal things, that it cannot be otherwise. He that really is convinced that there is a heaven and hell, and an eternal judgment; that the soul, as soon as parted from the body, appears before the judgment-seat of God; and that the happiness and misery of a future state is as great as the Scriptures represents it; or that God is as holy, just, and jealous, as he hath declared concerning himself in his word; I say, he that is really convinced, and hath settled it with himself, that these things are certainly true, will be influenced by them above all things in the world. He will be more concerned by far how he shall escape eternal damnation, and have the favor of God and eternal life, than how he shall

get the world, gratify the flesh, please his neighbors, get honor, or obtain any temporal advantage whatsoever. His main inquiry will not be, *what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, etc. but he will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.*

Examine yourselves therefore by this: Are not your hearts chiefly set upon the world and the things of it? Is it not more your concern, care, and endeavor to further your outward interest, than to secure an interest in heaven? And is not this the very reason that you have never seen the reality of eternal things?

Secondly, inquire whether you have ever yet come to a determination about religion with respect to the practice of it; whether you have chosen heaven with the way to it, viz. the way of obedience and self-denial, before this world and the ways of sin; whether you have determined upon it as most eligible, to devote yourselves to the service of God. — Here I shall mention three or four things which are signs that men halt between two opinions in the matter.

1. To put off duty till hereafter. When persons love to keep their duty at a distance, engage not in it for the present, but think of engaging when they shall be under better conveniences for it; — when they are very good *intenders* concerning what they will do tomorrow, but very poor *performers* today; when they say, as Felix, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" — it is a sign that they halt between two opinions, and have never as yet come to a full determination with respect to the practice of religion. Those that have once fully determined that religion is necessary and eligible, will not desire to put it off, but will make it their present and immediate business.

2. It is a sign of the same thing when persons are strict and conscientious in some things, but not universal in their obedience; do some duties, but live in the omission of others; avoid some sins, but allow themselves in others; are conscientious with respect to the duties of worship public and private, but not in their behavior to their neighbors; are not just in their dealings, nor conscientious in paying their debts; nor do to others as they would that they should do to them; but have crooked perverse ways in their dealings among mankind.

The same may be said when they are just in their dealings and trade with men, but are not conscientious in other things " indulge sensual appetite, drink to excess, or allow themselves in wanton practices; or are honest and temperate, but licentious in using their tongues, backbiting and reproaching their fellowmen," 2 Tim. 3:6, 7.

3. It is a sign that you halt between two opinions if you sometimes are wont to be considerably engaged in religion, but at other times neglect it; sometimes forming a resolution to be in good earnest, then dropping it again; sometimes seeming to be really engaged in seeking salvation, and very earnest in religious duties; at other times wholly taken up about the things of the world, while religion is neglected, and religious duties are omitted.

These things show that you are yet unsettled, have never yet come to a full determination concerning religion, but are halting between two opinions, and therefore are thus unstable in all your ways, and proceed thus by fits and starts in religion. Jam. 1:6, 7, 8, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If your determination were fixed in religion, you would be more steady in your practice.

4. It is a sign that you are halting between two opinions if it be your manner to balk your duty whenever any notable difficulty comes in the way, considerably cross to your interest, or very inconsistent with your ease or convenience, or you temporal honor. Whatever zeal you may seem to have, whatever concern about the things of religion., and however strict you be in ordinary, you have never, if this be your manner, come to a full determination; have never fully made choice of religion and the benefits of it for your only portion; and at best have got no further than king Agrippa, who was *almost* persuaded to be a Christian, Acts 26:28. You are in the state of the stony-ground hearers, you have no root in yourselves, and like a tree without root, are easily blown down by every wind.

II. I shall conclude with an earnest exhortation to all, no longer to halt

between two opinions, but immediately to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not. Let me insist upon it, that you now make a choice, whether you will have heaven; with a life of universal and persevering obedience, for your portion; or hell, with a life spent in the pursuit of this world. — Consider those things which have been said, showing the unreasonableness of continuing in such irresolution about an affair of infinite importance to you, and as to which you have so short an opportunity to make your choice. — Consider two things in addition to what hath been already said.

First, those who live under the gospel, and thus continue undetermined about religion, are more abominable to God than the heathen. He hates those persons who continue from year to year, under the calls, and warnings, and instructions, and entreaties of God's Word; who yet can be brought to nothing; who will come to no determination at all; will neither be Christians nor heathens. These are they who are spoken of in Rev 3:15, 16, " I know thy works, that thou are neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." — And Eze. 20:39, "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols." — These are (2 Tim. 3:7) "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

Second, if you still refuse to come to a determination whether to be Christians or not, how just will it be, if God shall give you no further opportunity! If you refuse to make any choice at all-after all that hath been done to bring you to it, in setting life and death so often before you, in calling and warning you, how just will it be, if God shall wait no longer upon you. But shall, by his unalterable sentence, determine the case himself, and fix your state with the unbelievers, and teach you the truth and eligibleness of religion, by sad and fatal experience, when it will be too late for you to choose your portion.

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Christian Cautions

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." -- Psalm 139:23, 24

INTRODUCTION

Subject: Persons should be much concerned to know whether they do not live in some way of sin.

This psalm is a meditation on the omniscience of God, or upon his perfect view and knowledge of everything, which the psalmist represents by that perfect knowledge which God had of all his *actions*, his downsitting and his uprising; and of his *thoughts*, so that he knew his thoughts afar off; and of his *words*, "There is not a word in my tongue," says the psalmist, "but thou knowest it altogether." Then he represents it by the impossibility of fleeing from the divine presence, or of hiding from him. So that if he should go into heaven, or hide himself in hell, or fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, yet he would not be hid from God. Or if he should endeavor to hide himself in darkness, yet that would not cover him. But the darkness and light are both alike to him. Then he represents it by the knowledge which God had of him while in his mother's womb, Psa. 139:15, 16, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written."

After this the psalmist observes what must be inferred as a necessary *consequence* of this omniscience of God, *viz.* that he will slay the wicked, since he seeth all their wickedness, and nothing of it is hid from him. And last of all, the psalmist improves this meditation upon God's all-seeing eye, in begging of God that he would search and try him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting.

Three things may be noted in the words.

I. The act of mercy which the psalmist implores of God toward himself, *viz.* that God would search him. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.”

II. In what respect he desires to be searched, *viz.* “to see if there were any wicked way in him.” We are not to understand by it, that the psalmist means that God should search him for his own information. What he had said before, of God’s knowing all things, implies that he hath no need of that. The psalmist had said, in the second verse, that God understood his thought afar off; *i.e.* it was all plain before him, he saw it without difficulty, or without being forced to come nigh, and diligently to observe. That which is plain to be seen, may be seen at a distance.

Therefore, when the psalmist prays that God would search him to see if there were any wicked way in him, he cannot mean that he should search that he himself might see or be informed, but that the *psalmist* might see and be informed. He prays that God would search him by his discovering light; that he would lead him thoroughly to discern himself and see whether there were any wicked way in him. Such figurative expressions are often used in Scripture. The Word of God is said to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Not that the word itself discerns, but it searches and opens our hearts to view so that it enables us to discern the temper and desires of our hearts. So God is often said to *try* men. He doth not try them for his own information, but for the discovery and manifestation of them to themselves or others.

III. Observe to what end he thus desires God to search him, *viz.* “that he might be led in the way everlasting;” *i.e.* not only in a way which may have a specious show, and appear right to him for a while, and in which he may have peace and quietness for the present, but in the way which will hold, which will stand the test, which he may confidently abide by forever, and always approve of as good and right, and in which he may always have peace and joy. It is said, that “the way of the ungodly shall perish,” Psa. 1:6. In opposition to this, the way of the righteous is in the text said *to last forever*.

SECTION I

All men should be much concerned to know whether they do not live in some way of sin

DAVID was much concerned to know this concerning himself. He searched himself. He examined his own heart and ways. But he did not trust to that. He was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him which had escaped his notice. Therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.” He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of.

I. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a *state of sin*. All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin. Every unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Savior. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians. 2 Cor. 13:5, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved.

Every unconverted person lives in a *sinful way*. He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole course of his life is sinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good, Psa. 14:3, “They are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Sin is an unconverted man’s trade. It is the work and business of his life. For he is the servant of sin. And ordinarily hypocrites, or those who are wicked

men, and yet think themselves godly, and make a profession accordingly, are especially odious and abominable to God.

II. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in *some particular way* which is offensive and displeasing to God. This is what I principally intend. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of some *lust*, either in practice or in our thoughts, whether we do not live in the omission of some *duty*, something which God expects we should do, whether we do not go into some practice or manner of behavior, which is not *warrantable*. We should inquire whether we do not live in some practice which is against our light, and whether we do not allow ourselves in *known* sins.

We should be strict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and *mistaken notions* of our duty. Whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive to God, through want of *care* and watchfulness, and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the *profession* we make. And whether our practice in some things be not *unbecoming Christians*, contrary to Christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the holy Jesus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, because,

First, God requires of us that we exercise the utmost *watchfulness* and diligence in his service. *Reason* teaches that it is our duty to exercise the utmost care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to use our utmost diligence in everything to do it, because the service of God is the great business of our lives. It is that work which is the end of our beings. And God is worthy that we should serve him to the utmost of our power in all things. This is what *God* often expressly requires of us. Deu. 4:9, “Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.” And Deu. 4:15, 16, “Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves.” And Deu. 6:17, “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes which he hath commanded thee.” And Pro. 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for

out of it are the issues of life." So we are commanded by Christ to "watch and pray;" Mat. 26:41 and Luke 21:34, 36, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." Eph. 5:15, "See that ye walk circumspectly." So that if we be found in any evil way whatsoever, it will not excuse us, that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it, as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulness in us, which we ought to have maintained.

Second, if we live in any way of sin, we live in a way whereby God is *dishonored*. But the honor of God ought to be supremely regarded by all. If everyone would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live justly and holily, to walk in everything according to Christian rules, and would maintain a strict, watchful, and scrutinous eye over himself, to see if there were no wicked way in him, would give diligence to amend whatsoever is amiss, would avoid every unholy, unchristian, and sinful way, and if the practice of all were universally as becometh Christians, how greatly would this be to the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ! How greatly would it be to the credit and honor of religion! How would it tend to excite a high esteem of religion in spectators, and to recommend a holy life! How would it stop the mouths of objectors and opposers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified in the lives of Christians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true shape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If those who call themselves Christians, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, the conviction of sinners, and the propagation of religion among unbelievers, than all the sermons in the world, so long as the lives of those who are called Christians continue as they are now. For want of this *concern* and *watchfulness* in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly persons adorn not their profession as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in some things dishonor it. For want of being so much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether they do not walk in some way that is unbecoming a Christian, and offensive to God. Their behavior in some things is very

unlovely, and such as is an offense and stumbling-block to others, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

Third, we should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, as we would regard our own *interest*. If we live in any way of sin, it will be exceedingly to our hurt. Sin, as it is the most hateful evil, is that which is most prejudicial to our interest, and tends most to our hurt of anything in the world. If we live in any way that is displeasing to God, it may be the ruin of our souls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one sinful way, which they do not forsake, it may prove their everlasting undoing.

If we live in any way of sin, we shall thereby *provoke God* to anger, and bring guilt upon our own souls. Neither will it excuse us, that we were not sensible how evil that way was in which we walked, that we did not consider it, that we were blind as to any evil in it. We contract guilt not only by living in those ways which we know, but in those which we *might* know to be sinful, if we were but sufficiently concerned to know what is sinful and what not, and to examine ourselves, and search our own hearts and ways. If we walk in some evil way, and know it not for want of watchfulness and consideration, that will not excuse us. For we ought to have watched and considered, and made the most diligent inquiry.

If we walk in some evil way, it will be a great prejudice to us in *this world*. We shall thereby be deprived of that comfort which we otherwise might enjoy, and shall expose ourselves to a great deal of soul trouble, and sorrow, and darkness, which otherwise we might have been free from. A wicked way is the original way of pain or grief. In it we shall expose ourselves to the judgments of God, even in this world. And we shall be great losers by it, in respect to our *eternal interest*. And that though we may not live in a way of sin willfully, and with a deliberate resolution, but carelessly, and through the deceitfulness of our corruptions. However, we shall offend God, and prevent the flourishing of grace in our hearts, if not the very being of it.

Many are very careful that they do not proceed in mistakes, where their temporal interest is concerned. They will be strictly careful that they be not led on blindfold in the bargains which they make; in their traffic one

with another, they are careful to have their eyes about them, and to see that they go safely in these cases. And why not, where the interest of their souls is concerned?

Fourth, we should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, because we are exceedingly *prone* to walk in some such way. — The heart of man is naturally prone to sin. The weight of the soul is naturally that way, as the stone by its weight tendeth downwards. And there is very much of a remaining proneness to sin in the saints. Though sin be mortified in them, yet there is a body of sin and death remaining. There are all manner of lusts and corrupt inclinations. We are exceeding apt to get into some ill path or other. Man is so prone to sinful ways, that without maintaining a constant strict watch over himself, no other can be expected than that he will walk in some way of sin.

Our hearts are so full of sin that they are ready to betray us. That to which men are prone, they are apt to get into before they are aware. Sin is apt to steal in upon us unawares. Besides this, we live in a world where we continually meet with temptations. We walk in the midst of snares. And the devil, a subtle adversary, is continually watching over us, endeavoring, by all manner of wiles and devices, to lead us astray into by-paths. 2 Cor. 11:2, 3, "I am jealous over you. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 1 Pet. 5:8, "Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." — These things should make us the more jealous of ourselves.

Fifth, we ought to be concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, because there are many who live in such ways, and do not *consider* it, or are not sensible of it. It is a thing of great importance that we should know it, and yet the knowledge is not to be acquired without difficulty. Many live in ways which are offensive to God, who are not sensible of it. They are strangely blinded in this case. Psa. 19:12, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." By secret faults, the psalmist means those which are secret to himself, those sins which were in him, or which he was guilty of, and yet was not aware of.

SECTION II

Why many live in sin, and yet not know it

THAT the knowing whether we do not live in some way of sin is attended with difficulty is not because the rules of judging in such a case are not plain or plentiful. God hath abundantly taught us what we ought and what we ought not to do. And the rules by which we are to walk are often set before us in the preaching of the word. So that the difficulty of knowing whether there be any wicked way in us is not for want of external light, or for want of God's having told us plainly and abundantly what are wicked ways. But that many persons live in ways which are displeasing to God, and yet are not sensible of it, may arise from the following things.

I. For the blinding *deceitful nature of sin*. The heart of man is full of sin and corruption, and that corruption is of an exceedingly darkening, blinding nature. Sin always carries a degree of darkness with it. And the more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind. — It is from hence that the knowing whether there be any wicked way in us is a difficult thing. The difficulty is not at all for want of light without us, not at all because the Word of God is not plain, or the rules not clear, but is because of the darkness within us. The light shines clear enough around us, but the fault is in our eyes. They are darkened and blinded by a pernicious distemper.

Sin is of a deceitful nature because so far as it prevails, so far it gains the *inclination* and will, and that sways and biases the judgment. So far as any lust prevails, so far it biases the mind to approve of it. So far as any sin sways the inclination or will, so far that sin seems pleasing and prejudiced to think is right. — Hence when any lust hath so gained upon a man, as to get him into a sinful way or practice, it having gained his will, also prejudices his understanding. And the more irregular a man walks, the more will his mind probably be darkened and blinded, because by so much the more doth sin prevail.

Hence many men who live in ways which are not agreeable to the rules of God's Word, yet are not *sensible* of it. And it is a difficult thing to make

them so because the same lust that leads them into that evil way, blinds them in it. — Thus, if a man [lives] a way of malice or envy, the more malice or envy prevails, the more will it blind his understanding to approve of it. The more a man hates his neighbor, the more will he be disposed to think that he has just cause to hate him, and that his neighbor is hateful, and deserves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. So if a man live in any way of lasciviousness, the more his impure lust prevails, the more sweet and pleasant will it make the sin appear, and so the more will he be disposed and prejudiced to think there is no evil in it.

So the more a man lives in a way of covetousness, or the more inordinately he desires the profits of the world, the more will he think himself excusable in so doing, and the more will he think that he has a necessity of those things, and cannot do without them. And if they be necessary, then he is excusable for eagerly desiring them. The same might be shown of all the lusts which are in men's hearts. By how much the more they prevail, by so much the more do they blind the mind, and dispose the judgment to approve of them. All lusts are deceitful lusts. Eph. 4:22, "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." And even godly men may for a time be blinded and deluded by a lust, so far as to live in a way which is displeasing to God.

The lusts of men's hearts — prejudicing them in favor of sinful practices, to which those lusts tend, and in which they delight — stir up *carnal reason*, and put men, with all the subtlety of which they are capable, to invent pleas and arguments to justify such practices. When men are very strongly inclined and tempted to any wicked practice, and conscience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains to find out arguments to stop the mouth of conscience, and to make themselves believe that they may lawfully proceed in that practice.

When men have entered upon an ill practice, and proceeded in it, then their *self-love* prejudices them to approve of it. Men do not love to condemn themselves. They are prejudiced in their own favor, and in favor of whatever is found in themselves. Hence they will find out good names, by which to call their evil dispositions and practices. They will make them virtuous, or at least will make them innocent. Their covetousness they

will call prudence and diligence in business. If they rejoice at another's calamity, they pretend it is because they hope it will do him good, and will humble him. If they indulge in excessive drinking, it is because their constitutions require it. If they talk against and backbite their neighbor, they call it zeal against sin. It is because they would bear a testimony against such wickedness. If they set up their wills to oppose others in public affairs, then they call their willfulness conscience, or respect to the public good. — Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

Men are very apt to bring their principles to their practices, and not their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They, in their practice, comply not with their consciences, but all their strife is to bring their consciences to comply with their practice.

On the account of this deceitfulness of sin and because we have so much sin dwelling in our hearts, it is a difficult thing to pass a true judgment on our own ways and practices. On this account we should make diligent search and be much concerned to know whether there be not some wicked way in us. Heb. 3:12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Men can more easily see faults in others than they can in themselves. When they see others out of the way, they will presently condemn them, when perhaps they do, or have done, the same, or the like, themselves, and in themselves justify it. Men can discern motes in others' eyes, better than they can beams in their own. Pro. 21:2, "Every way of man is right in his own eyes." The heart in this matter is exceedingly deceitful. Jer. 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" We ought not therefore to trust in our own hearts in this matter, but to keep a jealous eye on ourselves, to pry into our own hearts and ways, and to cry to God that he would search us. Pro. 28:26, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

II. *Satan* also sets in with our deceitful lusts, and labors to blind us in this matter. He is continually endeavoring to lead us into sinful ways, and sets in with carnal reason to flatter us in such ways, and to blind the

conscience. He is the prince of darkness. He labors to blind and deceive. It hath been his work ever since he began it with our first parents.

III. Sometimes men are not sensible because they are *stupefied through custom*. Custom in an evil practice *stupefies* the mind, so that it makes any way of sin, which at first was offensive to conscience, after a while, to seem harmless.

IV. Sometimes persons live in ways of sin, and are not sensible of it, because they are *blinded* by common custom, and the *examples of others*. There are so many who go into the practice, and it is so common a custom, that it is esteemed little or no discredit to a man. It is little testified against. This causes some things to appear innocent which are very displeasing to God, and abominable in his sight. Perhaps we see them practiced by those of whom we have a high esteem, by our superiors, and those who are accounted wise men. This greatly prepossesses the mind in favor of them, and takes off the sense of their evil. Or if they be observed to be commonly practiced by those who are accounted godly men, men of experience in religion, this tends greatly to harden the heart, and blind the mind with respect to any evil practice.

V. Persons are in great danger of living in ways of sin and not being sensible of it, for want of duly regarding and considering their duty in the *full extent* of it. There are some who hear of the necessity of reforming from all sins, and attending all duties, and will see themselves to perform some particular duties, at the same time neglecting others. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up about religious duties, such as prayer in secret, reading the Scriptures and other good books, going to public worship and giving diligent attention, keeping the Sabbath, and serious meditation. They seem to regard these things, as though they comprised their duty in its full extent, and as if this were their whole work, and moral duties towards their neighbors, their duties in the relations in which they stand, their duties as husbands or wives, as brethren or sisters, or their duties as neighbors, seem not to be considered by them.

They consider not the *necessity* of those things. And when they hear of earnestly seeking salvation in a way of diligent attendance on all duties, they seem to leave those out of their thoughts, as if they were not meant;

nor any other duties, except reading, and praying, and keeping the Sabbath, and the like. Or if they do regard some parts of their moral duty, it may be other branches of it are not considered. Thus if they be just in their dealings, yet perhaps they neglect deeds of charity. They know they must not defraud their neighbor. They must not lie. They must not commit uncleanness. But seem not to consider what an evil it is to talk against others lightly, or to take up a reproach against them, or to contend and quarrel with them, or to live contrary to the rules of the gospel in their family-relations, or not to instruct their children or servants.

Many men seem to be very conscientious in some things, in some branches of their duty on which they keep their eye, when other important branches are entirely neglected, and seem not to be noticed by them. They regard not their duty in the full extent of it.

SECTION III

What method we ought to take, in order to find out whether we do not live in some way of sin.

THIS, as hath been observed, is a difficult thing to be known. But it is not a matter of so much difficulty, but that if persons were sufficiently concerned about it, and strict and thorough in inquiring and searching, it might, for the most part, be discovered. Men might know whether they live in any way of sin or not. Persons who are deeply concerned to please and obey God, need not, under the light we enjoy, go on in the ways of sin through ignorance.

It is true that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful. But God, in his holy word, hath given that light with respect to our duty, which is accommodated to the state of darkness in which we are. So that by thorough care and inquiry, we may know our duty, and know whether or no we live in any sinful way. And everyone who hath any true love to God and his duty will be glad of assistance in this inquiry. It is with such persons a concern which lies with much weight upon their spirits, in all things to walk as God would have them, and so as to please and honor him. If they live in any way which is offensive to God, they will be glad to

know it, and do by no means choose to have it concealed from them.

All those also, who in good earnest make the inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* will be glad to know whether they do not live in some sinful way of behavior. For if they live in any such way, it is a great disadvantage to them with respect to that great concern. It behooves everyone who is seeking salvation, to know and avoid every sinful way in which he lives. The means by which we must come to the knowledge of this are two, *viz.* the knowledge of the rule, and the knowledge of ourselves.

I. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take a great deal of pains to be thoroughly *acquainted with the rule.* — God hath given us a true and perfect rule, by which we ought to walk. And that we might be able, notwithstanding our darkness, and the disadvantages which attend us, to know our duty, he hath laid the rule before us abundantly. What a full and abundant revelation of the mind of God have we in the Scriptures! And how plain is it in what relates to practice! How often are rules repeated! In how many various forms are they revealed, that we might the more fully understand them!

But to what purpose will all this care of God to inform us be, if we neglect the *revelation* which God hath made of his mind, and take no care to become acquainted with it? It is impossible that we should know whether we do not live in a way of sin, unless we know the rule by which we are to walk. The sinfulness of any way consists in its disagreement from the rule. And we cannot know whether it [agrees] with the rule or not, unless we be acquainted with the rule. Rom 3:20, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Therefore, lest we go in ways displeasing to God, we ought with the greatest diligence to study the rules which God hath given us. We ought to read and search the Holy Scriptures much, and do it with the design to know the whole of our duty, and in order that the Word of God may be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths,” Psa. 119:105. Everyone ought to strive to get knowledge in divine things, and to grow in such knowledge, to the end that he may know his duty, and know what God would have him to do.

These things being so, are not the greater part of men very much to blame in that they take no more pains or care to acquire the knowledge of divine things? In that they no more study the Holy Scriptures, and other books which might inform them? As if it were the work of ministers only, to take pains to acquire this knowledge. But why is it so much a minister's work to strive after knowledge, unless it be, that others may acquire knowledge by him? — Will not many be found inexcusable in the sinful ways in which they live through ignorance and mistake, because their ignorance is a willful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault they are so. They have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will. But they take pains to acquire knowledge, and to be well skilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal interest depends. But will not take pains to know their duty.

We ought to take great pains to be well informed, especially in those things which immediately concern us, or which relate to our particular cases.

II. The other mean is the *knowledge of ourselves*, as subject to the rule. — If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take the utmost care to be well acquainted with ourselves, as well as with the rule, that we may be able to compare ourselves with the rule. When we have found what the rule is, then we should be strict in examining ourselves, whether or no we be conformed to the rule. This is the direct way in which our characters are to be discovered. It is one thing wherein man differs from brute creatures, that he is capable of self-refection, or of reflecting upon his own actions, and what passes in his own mind, and considering the nature and quality of them. And doubtless it was partly for this end that God gave us this power, which is denied to other creatures, that we might know ourselves, and consider our own ways.

We should examine our hearts and ways until we have satisfactorily discovered either their agreement or disagreement with the rules of Scripture. This is a matter that requires the utmost diligence, lest we overlook our irregularities, lest some evil way in us should lie hid under disguise, and pass unobserved. One would think we are under greater advantages to be acquainted with ourselves than with anything else. For we are always present with ourselves, and have an immediate

consciousness of our own actions. All that passeth in us, or is done by us, is immediately under our eye. Yet really in some respects the knowledge of nothing is so difficult to be obtained, as the knowledge of our ourselves. We should therefore use great diligence in prying into the secrets of our hearts and in examining all our ways and practices. That you may the more successfully use those means to know whether you do not live in some way of sin; be advised,

First, evermore to join *self-reflection* with reading and hearing the Word of God. When you read or hear, reflect on yourselves as you go along, comparing yourselves and your own ways with what you read or hear. Reflect and consider what agreement or disagreement there is between the word and your ways. The Scriptures testify against all manner of sin and contain directions for every duty. As the apostle saith, 2 Tim. 3:16, "And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Therefore when you there read the rules given us by Christ and his apostles, reflect and consider, each one of you with himself, Do I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any respect contrary to it?

When you read in the historical parts of Scripture an account of the sins of which others have been guilty, reflect on yourselves as you go along, and inquire whether you do not in some degree live in the same or like practices. When you there read accounts how God reproved the sins of others, and executed judgments upon them for their sins, examine whether you be not guilty of things of the same nature. When you read the examples of Christ, and of the saints recorded in Scripture, inquire whether you do not live in ways contrary to those examples. When you read there how God commended and rewarded any persons for their virtues and good deeds, inquire whether you perform those duties for which they were commended and rewarded, or whether you do not live in the contrary sins or vices. Let me further direct you, particularly to read the Scriptures to these ends, that you may compare and examine yourselves in the manner now mentioned.

So if you would know whether you do not live in some way of sin, whenever you hear any sin testified against, or any duty urged, in the preaching of the word, be careful to look back upon yourselves, to

compare yourselves, and your own ways with what you hear, and strictly examine yourselves, whether you live in this or the other sinful way which you hear testified against. and whether you do this duty which you hear urged. Make use of the word as a glass, wherein you may behold yourselves.

How few are there who do this as they ought to do! who, while the minister is testifying against sin, are busy with themselves in examining their own hearts and ways! The generality rather think of others, how this or that person lives in a manner contrary to what is preached. So that there may be hundreds of things delivered in the preaching of the word, which properly belong to them, and are well suited to their cases, yet it never so much as comes into their minds, that what is delivered any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix upon others, and they can charge them, but never think whether or no they themselves be the persons.

Second, if you live in any ways which are *generally condemned by the better* and more sober *sort of men*, be especially careful to inquire concerning these, whether they be not ways of sin. Perhaps you have argued with yourselves that such or such a practice is lawful. You cannot see any evil in it. However, if it be generally condemned by godly ministers, and the better more pious sort of people, it certainly looks suspicious, whether or no there be not some evil in it. So that you may well be put upon inquiring with the utmost strictness, whether it be not sinful. The practice being so generally disapproved of by those who in such cases are most likely to be in the right, may reasonably put you upon more than ordinarily nice and diligent inquiry concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of it.

Third, examine yourselves whether all the ways in which you live are likely to be *pleasant to think of upon a deathbed.* Persons often in health allow and plead for those things which they would not dare to do, if they looked upon themselves as shortly about to go out of the world. They in a great measure still their consciences as to ways in which they walk, and keep them pretty easy, while death is thought of as at a distance. Yet reflections on these same ways are very uncomfortable when they are going out of the world. Conscience is not so easily blinded and muffled then as at other times.

Consider therefore, and inquire diligently, whether or no you do not live in some practice or other, as to the lawfulness of which, when it shall come into your minds upon your death-bed, you will choose to have some further satisfaction, and some better argument than you now have, to prove that it is not sinful, in order to your being easy about it. Think over your particular ways, and try yourselves, with the awful expectation of soon going out of the world into eternity, and earnestly endeavor impartially to judge what ways you will on a death-bed approve of and rejoice in, and what you will disapprove of, and wish you had let alone.

Fourth, be advised to consider *what others say of you*, and improve it to this end, to know whether you do not live in some way of sin. Although men are blind to their own faults, yet they easily discover the faults of others, and are apt enough to speak of them. Sometimes persons live in ways which do not at all become them, yet are blind to it themselves, not seeing the deformity of their own ways, while it is most plain and evident to others. They themselves cannot see it, yet others cannot shut their eyes against it, cannot avoid seeing it.

For instance, some persons are of a very *proud* behavior, and are not sensible of it. But it appears notorious to others. Some are of a very *worldly* spirit, they are set after the world, so as to be noted for it, so as to have a name for it. Yet they seem not to be sensible of it themselves. Some are of a very *malicious* and *envious* spirit. And others see it, and to them it appears very hateful. Yet they themselves do not reflect upon it. Therefore since there is no trusting to our own hearts and our own eyes in such cases, we should make our improvement of what others say of us, observe what they charge us with, and what fault they find with us, and strictly examine whether there be not foundation for it.

If others charge us with being proud, or worldly, close, and niggardly; or spiteful and malicious, or with any other ill temper or practice, we should improve it in self-reflection, to inquire whether it be not so. And though the imputation may seem to us to be very groundless, and we think that they, in charging us so and so, are influenced by no good spirit, yet if we act prudently, we shall take so much notice of it as to make it an occasion of examining ourselves.

Thus we should improve what our *friends* say to us and of us, when they from friendship tell us of anything which they observe amiss in us. It is most imprudent, as well as most unchristian, to take it amiss, and resent it, when we are thus told of our faults. We should rather rejoice in it, that we are shown our spots. Thus also we should improve what our *enemies* say of us. If they from an ill spirit reproach and revile us to our faces, we should consider it, so far as to reflect inward upon ourselves, and inquire whether it be not so, as they charge us. For though what is said, be said in a reproachful, reviling manner, yet there may be too much truth in it. When men revile others even from an ill spirit towards them, yet they are likely to fix upon real faults. They are likely to fall upon us where we are weakest and most defective and where we have given them most occasion. An enemy will soonest attack us where we can least defend ourselves. And a man that reviles us, though he do it from an unchristian spirit, and in an unchristian manner, yet will be most likely to speak of that, for which we are really most to blame, and are most blamed by others.

So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, though they do very ill in so doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to *reflect upon ourselves*, and consider whether we indeed have not those faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more Christian and a more wise improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill-will towards them for their evil-speaking. This is the most wise and prudent improvement of such things. Hereby we may get good out of evil. And this is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies in reviling and backbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.

Fifth, be advised, *when you see others' faults*, to examine whether there be not the *same* in yourselves. This is not done by many, as is evident from this, that they are so ready to speak of others' faults, and aggravate them, when they have the very same themselves. Thus, nothing is more common than for proud men to accuse others of pride, and to declaim against them upon that account. So it is common for dishonest men to complain of being wronged by others. When a person seeth ill dispositions and practices in others, he is not under the same

disadvantage in seeing their odiousness and deformity, as when he looks upon any ill disposition or practice in himself. He can see how odious these and those things are in others. He can easily see what a hateful thing pride is in another. And so of malice and other evil dispositions or practices. In others he can easily see their deformity. For he doth not look through such a deceitful glass, as when he sees the same things in himself.

Therefore, when you see others' faults, when you take notice how such an one acts amiss, what an ill spirit he shows, and how unsuitable his behavior is, when you hear others speak of it, and when you yourselves find fault with others in their dealings with you, or in things wherein you are any way concerned with them, then reflect and consider whether there be nothing of the same nature in yourselves. Consider that these things are just as deformed and hateful in you as they are in others. Pride, a haughty spirit and carriage, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbor. Your malicious and revengeful spirit towards your neighbor is just as hateful as a malicious and revengeful spirit in him towards you. It is as unreasonable for you to wrong and to be dishonest with your neighbor, as it is for him to wrong, and be dishonest with you. It is as injurious and unchristian for you to talk against others behind their backs, as it is for others to do the same with respect to you.

Sixth, consider the ways in which *others are blinded* as to sins in which they live, and strictly inquire whether *you* be not blinded in the same ways. You are sensible that others are blinded by their lusts. Consider whether the prevalence of some carnal appetite or lust of the mind have not blinded you. You see how others are blinded by their temporal interest. Inquire whether your temporal interests do not blind you also in some things, so as to make you allow yourselves in things which are not right. You are as liable to be blinded through inclination and interest, and have the same deceitful and wicked hearts as other men. Pro. 27:19, "As in waterface answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

SECTION IV

Particular subjects of self-examination — The Lord's day — God's house.

I DESIRE all those would strictly examine themselves in the following particulars, who are concerned not to live in any way of sin, as I hope there are a considerable number of such now present, and this certainly will be the case with all who are godly, and all who are duly concerned for their own salvation.

I. Examine yourselves with respect to the *sabbath-day*, whether you do not live in some way of breaking or profaning God's holy sabbath. Do you strictly in all things keep this day, as sacred to God, in governing your thoughts, words, and actions, as the Word of God requires on this holy day? Inquire whether you do not only fail in *particulars*, but whether you do not live in some *way* whereby this day is profaned. And particularly inquire concerning three things.

First, whether it be not a frequent thing with you to *encroach upon the sabbath* at its *beginning*, *__1__* and after the sabbath is begun to be out at your work, or following that worldly business which is proper to be done only in our own time. If this be a thing in which you allow yourselves, you live in a way of sin. For it is a thing which can by no means be justified. You have no more warrant to be out with your team, or to be cutting wood, or doing any other worldly business, immediately after the sabbath is begun, than you have to do it in the middle of the day. The time is as holy near the beginning of the sabbath as it is in the middle. It is the whole that we are to rest, and to keep holy, and devote to God. We have no license to take any part of it to ourselves.

When men often thus *encroach* upon the sabbath, it cannot be from any necessity which can justify them. It can only be for want of due care, and due regard to holy time. They can with due care get their work finished so that they can leave it by a certain hour. This is evident, for when they are under a natural necessity of finishing their work by a certain time, then they do take that care as to have done before that time comes. As, for instance, when they are aware that at such a time it will be dark, and they will not be able to follow their work any longer, but will be under a natural necessity of leaving off. Why, then, they will and do take care ordinarily to have finished their work before that time. And this although the darkness sometimes begins sooner, and sometimes later.

This shows, that with due care men can ordinarily have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finish their work by a limited time when they are under a natural necessity of it, the same care would as well finish it by a certain time when we are only under a moral necessity. If men knew that as soon as ever the sabbath should begin, it would be perfectly dark, so that they would be under a natural necessity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we should see that they would generally have their work done before the time. This shows that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men so frequently have some of their work abroad to do after the sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden should be borne after the beginning of the sabbath, Neh. 13:19, "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath," *i.e.* began to be darkened by the shade of the mountains before sun-set, "I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the sabbath-day."

Second, examine whether it be not you manner to *talk on the sabbath* of things *unsuitable* for holy time. If you do not move such talk yourselves, yet when you fall into company that set you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the business of the day? There is as much reason that you should keep the sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unsuitable for you to employ your *hands* about common and worldly things, why is it not as unsuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

Third, inquire whether it be not your manner to *loiter away the time* of the sabbath and to spend it in a great measure in idleness, in doing nothing. Do you not spend more time on sabbath-day, than on other days, on your beds, or otherwise idling away the time, not improving it as a precious opportunity of seeking God, and your own salvation?

II. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to the *institutions of God's house.* Here I shall mention several

instances.

First, do you not wholly neglect some of those institutions, as particularly the *sacrament of the Lord's supper?* Perhaps you pretend scruples of conscience, that you are not fit to come to that ordinance, and question whether you be commanded to come. But are your scruples the result of a serious and careful inquiry? Are they not rather a cloak for your own negligence, indolence, and thoughtlessness concerning your duty? Are you satisfied, have you thoroughly inquired and looked into this matter? If not, do you not live in sin, in that you do not more thoroughly inquire? Are you excusable in neglecting a positive institution, when you are scrupulous about your duty, and yet do not thoroughly inquire what it is?

But be it so, that you are *unprepared.* Is not this your own sin, your own fault? And can sin excuse you from attending on a positive institution of Christ? When persons are like to have children to be baptized, they can be convinced that it is their duty to come. If it be only conscience that detained them, why doth it not detain them as well now as heretofore? Or if they now be more thorough in their inquiries concerning their duty, ought they not to have been thorough in their inquiries before as well as now?

Second, do you not live in sin, in living in the neglect of *singing God's praises?* If singing praise to God be an ordinance of God's public worship, as doubtless it is, then it ought to be performed by the whole worshipping assembly. If it be a command that we should worship God in this way, then all ought to obey this command, not only by joining with others in singing, but in singing themselves. For if we suppose it answers the command of God for us only to join in our hearts with others, it will run us into this absurdity, that *all* may do so. And then there would be none to sing, none for others to join with.

If it be an appointment of God, that Christian congregations should sing praises to him, then doubtless it is the duty of *all.* If there be no exception in the rule, then all ought to comply with it, unless they be incapable of it, or unless it would be a hindrance to the other work of God's house, as the case may be with ministers, who sometimes may be in great need of that respite and intermission after public prayers, to recover their breath and

strength, so that they may be fit to speak the word. But if persons be now not capable, because they know not how to sing, that doth not excuse them, unless they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all should sing, so all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship. Not only should persons make conscience of learning to sing themselves, but parents should conscientiously see to it, that their children are taught this among other things, as their education and instruction belongs to them.

Third, are you not guilty of allowing yourselves in sin, in neglecting to do your part towards the *removal of scandals* from among us? All persons that are in the church, and the children of the church, are under the watch of the church. And it is one of those duties to which we are bound by the covenant which we either actually or virtually make, in uniting ourselves to a particular church, that we will watch over our brethren, and do our part to uphold the ordinances of God in their purity. This is the end of the institution of particular churches, *viz.* the maintaining of the ordinances of divine worship there, in the manner which God hath appointed.

Examine whether you have not allowed yourselves in sin with respect to this matter, through fear of offending your neighbors. Have you not allowedly neglected the proper steps for removing scandals, when you have seen them. The steps of reproving them privately, where the case would allow of it, and of telling them to the church, where the case required it? Instead of watching over your brother, have you not rather hid yourselves, that ye might not be witnesses against him? and when you have seen scandal in him, have you not avoided the taking of proper steps according to the case?

Fourth, art not thou one whose manner it is to come *late to the public worship* of God, and especially in *winter*, when the weather is cold? And dost thou not live in sin in so doing? Consider whether it be a way which can be justified, whether it be a practice which doth honor to God and religion, whether it have not the appearance of setting light by the public

worship and ordinances of God's house. Doth it not show that thou dost not prize such opportunities, and that thou art willing to have as little of them as thou canst? Is it not a disorderly practice? And if all should do as thou dost, what confusion would it occasion?

Fifth, art thou not one whose manner it commonly is to *sleep in the time of public service?* And is not this to live in a way of sin? Consider the matter rationally. Is it a thing to be justified, for thee to lay thyself down to sleep, while thou are present in the time of divine service, and pretendest to be one of the worshipping assembly, and to be hearing a message from God? Would it not be looked upon as a high affront, an odious behavior, if thou shouldst do so in the presence of a king, while a message was delivering to thee, in his name, by one of his servants? Canst thou put a greater contempt on the message which the King of kings sendeth to thee, concerning things of the greatest importance, than from time to time to lay thyself down, and compose thyself to sleep, while the messenger is delivering his message to thee?

Sixth. art thou not one who is *not careful to keep his mind intent* upon what is said and done in public worship? Dost thou not, in the midst of the most solemn acts of worship, suffer thy thoughts to rove after worldly objects, worldly cares and concerns, or perhaps the objects of thy wicked lusts and desires? And dost thou not herein live in a way of sin?

SECTION V

Self-examination concerning secret sins

I SHALL now propose to you to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some secret sin, whether you do not live in the neglect of some secret duty, or secretly live in some practice which is offensive to the pure and all-seeing eye of God. Here you should examine yourselves concerning all secret duties, as reading, meditation, secret prayer; whether you attend those at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unsteady and careless manner. You should also examine yourselves concerning all secret sins. Strictly inquire what your behavior is, when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other restraints than those of conscience, when you are not afraid of the

eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the all-seeing eye of God. — Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I shall particularly mention two.

I. Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of *reading the Holy Scriptures*. The Holy Scriptures were surely written to be read. And unless we be *popish* in our principles, we shall maintain that they were not only given to be read by ministers, but by the people too. It doth not answer the design for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read something in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually conversed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer must always have his rule with him in his work, and the blind man that walks must always have his guide by him, and he that walks in darkness must have his light with him, so the Scriptures were given to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path*.

That we may continually use the Scriptures as our rule of life, we should make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually. Jos. 1:8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." See also Deu. 6:6-9. So Christ commands us to search the Scriptures, John 5:39. These are the mines wherein we are to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it so far, that you may be said to live in a way of sin.

II. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of secretly *gratifying some sensual lust*. There are many ways and degrees wherein a carnal lust may be indulged. But every way is provoking to a holy God. Consider whether, although you restrain yourselves from more gross indulgences, you do not, in some way or other, and in some degree or other, secretly from time to time gratify your lusts, and allow yourselves to taste the sweets of unlawful delight.

Persons may greatly provoke God, by only allowedly gratifying their lusts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may also greatly provoke God by excess and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in those things which are in themselves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in some sinful way or other, in secretly gratifying a sinful

appetite.

SECTION VI

Self-examination concerning our temper of mind towards our neighbors — and our dealings with them.

I WOULD propose to you to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin, —

I. In the spirit and *temper of mind* which you allow towards your neighbor.

First, do you not allow and indulge a *passionate*, furious disposition? If your natural temper be hasty and passionate, do you truly strive against such a temper, and labor to govern your spirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourselves to prevent it? Or do you allow yourselves in a fiery temper? Such a disposition doth not become a *Christian*, or a *man*. It doth not become a man, because it unmans him. It turns a man from a rational creature, to be like a wild beast. When men are under the prevalency of a furious passion, they have not much of the exercise of reason. We are warned to avoid such men, as being dangerous creatures, Pro. 22:24, 25, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

Second, do not you live in *hatred* towards some or other of your neighbors? Do you not hate him for real or supposed injuries that you have received from him? Do you not hate him because he is not friendly towards you, and because you judge that he hath an ill spirit against you, and hates you, and because he opposes you, and doth not show you that respect which you think belongs to you, or doth not show himself forward to promote your interest or honor? Do you not hate him because you think he despises you, has mean thoughts of you, and takes occasion to show it? Do you not hate him because he is of the opposite party to that which is in your interest, and because he has considerable influence in that party.

Doubtless you will be loth to call it by so harsh a name as *hatred*. But inquire seriously and impartially, whether it be anything better. Do you not feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing disposition within you to be pleased when you hear him talked against and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any dishonor put upon him, or of any disappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in such ways as these?

Third, inquire whether you do not live in envy towards some one at least of your neighbors. Is not his prosperity, his riches, or his advancement in honor, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at least less good will to him because you look upon him as standing in your way. You look upon yourself as depressed by his advancement? And would it not be pleasing to you now, if he should be deprived of his riches, or of his honors, not from pure respect to the public good, but because you reckon he stands in your way? Is it not merely from a selfish spirit that you are so uneasy at his prosperity?

II. I shall propose to your consideration, whether you do not live in some way of sin, and wrong in your *dealings with your neighbors*.

First, inquire whether you do not from time to time *injure and defraud* those with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbor altogether just, such as will bear a trial by the strict rules of the Word of God, or such as you can justify before God? Are you a faithful person? May your neighbors depend on your word? Are you strictly and firmly true to your trust, or anything with which you are betrusted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly show, that you are not conscientious in such things?

Do you not live in a careless sinful neglect of *paying your debts?* Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbor, sinfully withhold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to *oppress* your neighbor? When you see another in necessity, do you not thence take advantage to screw upon him? When you see a person ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take such an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and selling, and labor to

blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or to whom you sell, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you sell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not strictly keeping to the truth, when you see the falsehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

Second, do you not live in *some wrong which you have formerly done* your neighbor without repairing it? Are you not conscious that you have formerly, at some time or other, wronged your neighbor, and yet you live in it, have never repaired the injury which you have done him? If so, you live in a way of sin.

SECTION VII

Self-examination respecting charity towards our neighbors, and conversation with them

I DESIRE you would examine yourselves,

I. Whether you do not live in the neglect of the duties of *charity* towards your neighbor. You may live in sin towards your neighbor, though you cannot charge yourselves with living in any injustice in your dealings. Here also I would mention two things.

First, whether you are guilty of *sinfully withholding* from your neighbor who is in want. Giving to the poor, and giving liberally and bountifully, is a duty absolutely required of us. It is not a thing left to persons' choice to do as they please. Nor is it merely a thing commendable in persons to be liberal to others in want. But it is a duty as strictly and absolutely required and commanded as any other duty whatsoever, a duty from which God will not acquit us. As you may see in Deu. 15:7, 8, etc. And the neglect of this duty is very provoking to God. Pro. 21:13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also himself shall cry, and not be heard."

Inquire, therefore, whether you have not lived in a way of sin in this regard. Do you not see your neighbor suffer, and pinched with want, and you, although sensible of it, harden your hearts against him, and are careless about it? Do you not in such a case, neglect to inquire into his necessities, and to do something for his relief? Is it not your manner to

hide your eyes in such cases, and to be so far from devising liberal things, and endeavoring to find out the proper objects and occasions of charity, that you rather contrive to avoid the knowledge of them? Are you not apt to make objections to such duties, and to excuse yourselves? And are you not sorry for such occasions, on which you are forced to give something, or expose your reputation? — Are not such things grievous to you? If these things be so, surely you live in sin, and in great sin, and have need to inquire, whether your spot be not such as is not the spot of God's children.

Second, do you not live in the neglect of reproving your neighbor, when you see him going on in a way of sin? This is required of us by the command of God, as a duty of love and charity which we owe our neighbor. Lev. 19:17, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." When we see our neighbor going on in sin, we ought to go, and in a Christian way deal with him about it. Nor will it excuse us, that we fear it will have no good effect. We cannot certainly tell what effect it will have. This is past doubt, that if Christians generally performed this duty as they ought to do, it would prevent abundance of sin and wickedness, and would deliver many a soul from the ways of death.

If a man going on in the ways of sin, saw that it was generally disliked and discountenanced, and testified against by others, it would have a strong tendency to reform him. His regard for his own reputation would strongly persuade him to reform. For hereby he would see that the way in which he lives makes him odious in the eyes of others. When persons go on in sin, and no one saith anything to them in testimony against it, they know not but that their ways are approved, and are not sensible that it is much to their dishonor to do as they do. The approbation of others tends to blind men's eyes, and harden their hearts in sin. Whereas, if they saw that others utterly disapprove of their ways, it would tend to open their eyes and convince them.

If others neglect their duty in this respect, and our reproof alone will not be so likely to be effectual; yet that doth not excuse us. For if one singly may be excused, then everyone may be excused, and so we shall make it no duty at all.

Persons often need the reproofs and admonitions of others to make them sensible that the ways in which they live are sinful. For, as hath been already observed, men are often blinded as to their own sins.

II. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in your *conversation* with your neighbors. Men commit abundance of sin, not only in the business and dealings which they have with their neighbors, but in their talk and converse with them.

First, inquire whether you do not keep company with persons of a *lewd and immoral* behavior, with persons who do not make conscience of their ways, are not of sober lives, but on the contrary, are profane and extravagant, and unclean in their communication. This is what the Word of God forbids and testifies against. Pro. 14:7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Pro. 13:20, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." The psalmist professes himself clear of this sin. Psa.26:4, 5, "I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go with dissemblers: I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked."

Do you not live in this sin? Do you not keep company with such persons? And have you not found them a snare to your souls? If you have any serious thoughts about the great concerns of your souls, have you not found this a great hindrance to you? Have you not found that it hath been a great temptation to you? Have you not been from time to time led into sin thereby? Perhaps it may seem difficult wholly to forsake your old wicked companions. You are afraid they will deride you, and make game of you. Therefore you have not courage enough to do it. But whether it be difficult or not, yet know this, that if you continue in such connections, you live in a way of sin, and, as the Scripture saith, *you shall be destroyed*. You must either cut off your right hands, and pluck out your right eyes, or else even go with them into the fire that never shall be quenched.

Second, consider whether in your conversation with others, you do not accustom yourselves to *evil speaking*. How common is it for persons, when they meet together, to sit and spend their time in talking against

others, judging this or that of them, spreading ill and uncertain reports which they have heard of them, running down one and another, and ridiculing their infirmities! How much is such sort of talk as this the entertainment of companies when they meet together! And what talk is there which seems to be more entertaining, to which persons will more listen, and in which they will seem to be more engaged, than such talk! You cannot but know how common this is.

Therefore examine whether you be not guilty of this. — And can you justify it? Do you not know it to be a way of sin, a way which is condemned by many rules in the Word of God? Are you not guilty of eagerly taking up any ill report which you hear of your neighbor, seeming to be glad that you have some news to talk of, with which you think others will be entertained? Do you not often spread ill reports which you hear of others, before you know what ground there is for them? Do you not take a pleasure in being the reporter of such news? Are you not wont to pass a judgment concerning others, or their behavior, without talking to them, and hearing what they have to say for themselves? Doth not that folly and shame belong to you which is spoken of in Pro. 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him"

This is utterly an inquiry, a very unchristian practice, which commonly prevails, that men, when they hear or know of any ill of others, will not do a Christian part, in going to talk with them about it, to reprove them for it, but will get behind their backs before they open their mouths, and *there* are very forward to speak, and to judge, to the hurt of their neighbor's good name. Consider whether you be not guilty of this. Consider also how apt you are to be displeased when you hear that others have been talking against you! How forward are you to apply the rules, and to think and tell how they ought first to have come and talked with you about it, and not to have gone and spread an ill report of you, before they knew what you had to say in your vindication! How ready are persons to resent it, when others meddle with their private affairs, and busy themselves, and judge, and find fault, and declaim against them! How ready are they to say, it is no business of theirs! Yet are you not guilty of the same?

Third, is it not your manner to seem to countenance and *fall in with the*

talk of the company in which you are, in that which is *evil?* When the company is vain in its talk, and falls into lewd discourse, or vain jesting, is it not you manner, in such a case, to comply and fall in with the company, to seem pleased with its talk, if not to join with it, and help to carry on such discourse, out of compliance with your company, though indeed you disapprove of it in your hearts? So inquire, whether it be not your manner to fall in with your companions, when they are talking against others. Do you not help forward the discourse, or at least seem to fall in with their censures, the aspersions they cast on others, and the reflections they make upon their neighbors' characters?

There are some persons, who, in case of difference between persons or parties, are *double-tongued*, will seem to fall in with *both* parties. When they are with those on one side, they will *seem* to comply with them, and will condemn the other party; which is a very vile and deceitful practice. Seeming to be friendly to both before their faces, they are enemies to both behind their backs. And that upon so mean a motive as the pleasing of the party with which they are in company. They injure both parties, and do what in them lies to establish the difference between them. Inquire whether or no this be your manner.

Fourth, is it not your manner, not to confine yourselves to *strict truth* in your conversation with your neighbors? Lying is accounted ignominious and reproachful among men. And they take it in high disdain to be called liars. Yet how many are there that do not so govern their tongues, as strictly to confine them to the truth! There are various degrees of transgressing in this kind. Some, who may be cautious of transgressing in one degree, may allow themselves in another. Some, who commonly avoid speaking directly and wholly contrary to truth, in a plain matter of fact, yet perhaps are not strictly true in speaking of their own thoughts, desires, affections, and designs, and are not exact to the truth, in the relations which they give of things in conversation, scruple not to vary in circumstances, to add some things, to make their story the more entertaining, will magnify and enlarge things, to make their relation the more wonderful, and in things wherein their interest or credit is concerned, will make false representations of things, will be guilty of an unwarrantable equivocation, and a guileful way of speaking, wherein they

are chargeable with a great abuse of language. In order to save their veracity, words and sentences must be wrested to a meaning quite beside their natural and established signification. Whatever interpretation such men put on their own words, they do not save themselves from the guilt of lying in the sight of God. Inquire whether you be not guilty of living in sin in this particular.

SECTION VIII

Self-examination respecting the families to which we belong

EXAMINE yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in the *families to which you belong*. There are many persons who appear well among their neighbors and seem to be of an honest, civil behavior in their dealings and conversation abroad, yet if you follow them to their own houses, and to the families to which they belong, there you will find them very perverse in their ways. There they live in ways which are very displeasing to the pure all-searching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your conversation abroad. You have been directed to search the house of God, and to see if you have brought no defilement into it. You have been directed to search your closets, to see if there be no pollution or provocation there. Be advised now to search your *houses*, examine your behavior in the families to which you belong, and see what your ways and manners are there.

The houses to which we belong are the places where the generality of us spend the greater part of our time. If we respect the world as a man's sphere of action, a man's own house is the greater part of the world to him; *i.e.* the greater part of his actions and behavior in the world is limited within this sphere. We should therefore be very critical in examining our behavior, not only abroad, but at home. A great proportion of the wickedness of which men are guilty, and that will be brought out at the day of judgment, will be the sin which they shall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourselves in the *family relations* in which you stand. As those relative duties which we owe towards the members of the same family belong to the second table of the law, so love

is the general duty which comprises them all. Therefore,

I. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way which is *contrary to that love* which is due to those who belong to the same family. Love, implying a hearty good will, and a behavior agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbors, to whom we are no otherwise related than as they are our neighbors. Yea, we owe it to those who stand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reasonable creatures, the sons and daughters of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies. How much more then do we owe it to those who stand in so near a relation to us as a husband or wife, parents or children, brethren or sisters!

There are the same obligations on us to love such relatives as to love the rest of mankind. We are to love them as men. We are to love them as our neighbors. We are to love them as belonging to the same Christian church. And not only so, but here is an additional obligation, arising from that near relation in which they stand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very displeasing to God. But how much more towards one of the same family! Love is the uniting band of all societies. Col. 3:14, "And above all these things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness."

The union in love in our own family should be so much the stronger, as that society is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourselves, or is a society in which we are more especially interested. Christ saith, Mat. 5:22, "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." If this be true concerning those who are our brethren only as men, or professing Christians, how much more concerning those who are of the same family! If contention be so evil a thing in a town among neighbors, how much more hateful is it between members of the same family! If hatred, envy, or revenge, be so displeasing to God, towards those who are only our fellow creatures, how much more provoking must it be between those that are our natural brothers and sisters, and are one bone and flesh! If

only being angry with a neighbor without a cause be so evil, how much sin must needs be committed in those broils and quarrels between the nearest relations on earth!

Let everyone inquire how it is with himself. Do you not in this respect allow yourselves in some way of sin? Are you not often jarring and contending with those who dwell under the same roof? Is not your spirit often ruffled with anger towards some of the same family? Do you not often go so far as to wish evil to them in your hearts, wish that some calamity would befall them? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts? Do you not neglect and refuse those offices of kindness and mutual helpfulness which become those who are of one family? Yea, are there not some who really go so far, as in some degree to entertain a settled hatred or malice against some of their nearest relations? — But here I would particularly apply myself,

First, to *husbands and wives.* Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin in this relation. Do you make conscience of performing all those duties which God in his word requires of persons in this relation? Or do you allow yourselves in some ways which are directly opposite thereto? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligations into which you entered in your marriage-covenant? The promises which you then made are not only binding as promises which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promissory oaths. They are made in the presence of God because they respect him as a witness to them. And therefore the marriage-covenant is called *the covenant of God.* Pro. 2:17, “which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.” When you have vowed that you will behave towards those to whom you are thus united, as the Word of God directs in such a relation, are you careless about it, no more thinking what you have promised and vowed, regardless how you perform those vows?

Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterness of spirit towards one another, and of unkindness in your language and behavior? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbors, what is it then between those whom God hath joined together to be one flesh, and between whom he hath

commanded so great and dear a friendship to be maintained? Eph. 5:28, 29, “So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Eph. 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

It is no excuse at all for either party to indulge bitterness and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame. For when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found who had no faults? When God commanded such an entire friendship between man and wife, he knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults. Yet he made no exception. And if you think your yoke-fellows have faults, you should consider whether you yourselves have not some too. There never will be any such thing as persons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be esteemed a sufficient and justifiable cause of the contrary. It becomes good friends to cover one another’s faults: *Love covers a multitude of faults*. Pro. 10:12, “Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins.” But are not you rather quick to spy faults, and ready to make the most of them. Are not very little things often the occasion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your spirits towards your companions? And when any misunderstanding is begun, are you not guilty of exasperating one another’s spirits by unkind language, until you blow up a spark into a flame?

Do you endeavor to accommodate yourselves to each other’s tempers? Do you study to suit each other? Or do you set up your own wills, to have your own ways, in opposition to each other, in the management of your family concerns? Do you make it your study to render each other’s lives comfortable? Or is there not, on the contrary, very often subsisting between you a spirit of ill will, a disposition to vex and cross one another?

Husbands do sometimes greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind imperious behavior towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants; and (to mention one instance of such treatment in particular) laying them under unjust and unreasonable restraints in the use and disposal of their common property; forbidding them so much as to dispose of anything in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence.

This is directly contrary to the Word of God, where it is said of the virtuous wife, Pro. 31:20, that "she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." If God hath made this her duty, then he hath given her this right and power, because the duty supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of anything, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God, the rules of his word, and the solemn vows of the marriage-covenant, with respect to the subordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Eph. 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord:" so Col. 3:18. What is commanded by God, and what hath been solemnly vowed and sworn in his presence, certainly ought not to be made a jest of. And the person who lightly violates these obligations, will doubtless be treated as one who slights the authority of God, and takes his name in vain.

Second, I shall apply myself to *parents and heads of families*. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to your children, or others committed to your care: and particularly inquire,

1. Whether you do not live in sin by living in the *neglect of instructing* them. Do you not wholly neglect the duty of instructing your children and servants? Or if you do not wholly neglect it, yet do you not afford them so little instruction, and are you not so unsteady, and do you not take so little pains in it, that you live in a sinful neglect? Do you take pains in any measure proportionate to the importance of the matter? You cannot but own that it is a matter of vast importance, that your children be fitted for death, and saved from hell. And that all possible care be taken that it be done speedily. For you know not how soon your children may die. Are you as careful about the welfare of their souls as you are of their bodies? Do you labor as much that they may have eternal life, as you do to provide estates for them to live on in this world?

Let every parent inquire whether he do not live in a way of sin in this respect. And let masters inquire whether they do not live in a way of sin, in neglecting the poor souls of their servants whether their only care be

not to make their servants subservient to their worldly interest, without any concern what becomes of them to all eternity.

2. Do you not live in a sinful *neglect of the government* of your families? Do you not live in the sin of Eli? Who indeed counseled and reproved his children, but did not exercise government over them. He reproved them very solemnly, as 1 Sam. 2:23, 24, 25, but he did not restrain them, by which he greatly provoked God, and brought an everlasting curse upon his house. 1 Sam. 3:12, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. I will judge his house for ever; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

If you say you cannot restrain your children, this is not excuse. For it is a sign that you have brought up your children without government, that your children regard not your authority. When parents lose their government over their children, their reproofs and counsel signify but little. How many parents are there who are exceedingly faulty on this account! How few are there who are thorough in maintaining order and government in their families! How is family-government in a great measure vanished! And how many are as likely to bring a curse upon their families, as Eli! This is one principal ground of the corruptions which prevail in the land. This is the foundation of so much debauchery, and of such corrupt practices among young people. family-government is in a great measure extinct. By neglect in this particular, parents bring the guilt of their children's sins upon their own souls, and the blood of their children will be required at their hands.

Parents sometimes weaken one another's hands in this work; one parent disapproving what the other doth; one smiling upon a child, while the other frowns; one protecting, while the other corrects. When things in a family are thus, children are [likely] to be undone. Therefore let everyone examine whether he do not live in same way of sin with respect to this matter.

Third, I shall now apply myself to *children*. Let them examine themselves, whether they do not live in some way of sin towards their parents. Are you not guilty of some undutifulness towards them, in which

you allow yourselves? Are you not guilty of despising your parents for infirmities which you see in them? Undutiful children are ready to contemn their parents for their infirmities. Are not you sons of Ham, who saw and made derision of his father's nakedness, whereby he entailed a curse on himself and his posterity to this day. And not the sons of Shem and Japheth, who covered the nakedness of their father? Are you not guilty of dishonoring and despising your parents for natural infirmities, or those of old age? Pro. 23:22, "Despise not thy mother when she is old." Doth not that curse belong to you, in Deu. 27:16, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother?"

Are you not wont to despise the counsels and reproofs of your parents? When they warn you against any sin, and reprove you for any misconduct, are you not wont to set light by it, and to be impatient under it? Do you honor your parents for it? On the contrary, do you not receive it with resentment, proudly rejecting it? Doth it not stir up corruption, and a stubborn and perverse spirit in you, and rather make you to have an ill-will to your parents, than to love and honor them? Are you not to be reckoned among the fools mentioned Pro. 15:5, "A fool despiseth his father's instruction?" And doth not that curse belong to you. Pro. 30:17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it?"

Do you not allow a fretful disposition towards your parents when they cross you in anything? Are you not apt to find fault with your parents, and to be out of temper with them?

Consider, that if you live in such ways as these, you not only live in sin, but in that sin, than which there is scarcely anyone oftener threatened with a curse in the Word of God.

SECTION IX

Awakening considerations for self-examination.

WE come now to mention some things, in order to convince those who, upon examination, find that they do live in some way of sin, of the importance of their knowing and amending their manner of life. You have

had directions laid before you, how to find out whether you do live in any way of sin or not. And you have heard many particulars mentioned as proper subjects for your examination of yourselves. How then do you find things? Do you find yourselves clear of living in any way of sin? I mean not whether you find yourself clear of sin. That is not expected of any of you. For there is not a man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not, 1 Kin. 8:46. But is there not some way of sin in which you *live*, which is your *stated way* or *practice?* There are doubtless some who are clear in this matter, some "who are undefiled in the way, and do no iniquity," Psa. 119:1, 2, 3.

Let your own consciences answer how you find with respect to yourselves, by those things which have been proposed to you. Do you not find that you are guilty? That you *live* in a way of sin, and have *allowed* yourselves in it? — If this be the case, then consider the following things.

I. If you have been *long seeking salvation*, and have not yet succeeded, it may be this hath been the cause. You have perhaps wondered what hath been the matter, that you have been so long a time under concern about your salvation, that you have taken so much pains, and all earnestly to God, yet he doth not regard you. Others obtain comfort, but you are left in darkness. But is it any wonder at all, if you have lived in some way of sin all this while? If you have lived in any sinful way, this is a sufficient reason why all your prayers and all your pains have been blasted.

If all this while you have lived in some sinful way, so far you have failed of seeking salvation in the right way. The right way of seeking salvation is to seek it in the diligent performance of all duties, and in the denial of all ungodliness. If there be any one member that is corrupt, and you cut it not off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell (Mat. 5:29, 30).

II. If grace have not been flourishing, but, on the contrary, in *languishing circumstances in your souls*, perhaps this is the cause. The way to grow in grace is to walk in the way of obedience to all the commands of God, to be very thorough in the practice of religion. Grace will flourish in the hearts of those who live in this manner. But if you live in some way of sin, that will be like some secret disease at your vitals, which will keep you poor, weak, and languishing.

One way of sin lived in will wonderfully keep you down in your spiritual prosperity, and in the growth and strength of grace in your hearts. It will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and will in a great measure banish him from you. This will prevent the good influence of the word and ordinances of God to the causing of grace to flourish in you. It will be a great obstacle to their good effect. It will be like an ulcer within a man, which, while it remains, will keep him weak and lean, though you feed him with ever so wholesome food, or feast him ever so daintily.

III. If you have been left to *fall into great sin*, perhaps this was the occasion of it. If you have been left greatly to wound your own souls, perhaps this was what made way for it, that you allowed yourselves in some way of sin. A man who doth not avoid every sin, and is not universally obedient, cannot be well guarded against great sins. The sin in which he lives will be always an inlet, an open door, by which Satan from time to time will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortress, through which the enemy may get in, and find his way to you greatly to hurt and wound you.

If there be any way of sin which is retained as an outlet to corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which, if it be let alone, and be not stopped, will grow bigger and wider, and will endanger the whole. If any way of sin be lived in, it will be like *Gideon's ephod*, which was a snare to him and his house.

IV. If you live very much in *spiritual darkness*, and without the comfortable presence of God, it may be this is the cause. If you complain that you have but little sweet communion with God, that you seem to be left and deserted of God, that God seems to hide his face from you, and but seldom gives you the sweet views of his glory and grace, that you seem to be left very much to grope in darkness, and to wander in a wilderness. Perhaps you have wondered what is the matter; you have cried to God often, that you might have the light of his countenance, but he heareth you not. And you have sorrowful days and nights upon this account. But if you have found, by what hath been said, that you live in some way of sin, it is very probably *that* is the cause, that is the root of your mischief, that is the *Achan*, the troubler that offends God, and causes him to withdraw, and brings so many clouds of darkness upon

your souls. You grieve the Holy Spirit by the way in which you live. And that is the reason that you have no more comfort from him.

Christ hath promised, that he will manifest himself to his disciples. But it is upon the condition that they keep his commands. John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But if you habitually live in disobedience to any of the commandments of Christ, then it is no wonder that he doth not give you the comfortable manifestations of himself. The way to receive the special favors of God, and to enjoy comfortable communion with him, is to walk closely with him.

V. If you have been long *doubting about your condition*, perhaps this is the cause. If persons be converted, the most likely way to have the evidences of it clear, and to have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God, is to walk closely with God. This, as we have observed already, is the way to have grace in a flourishing state in the soul. It is the way to have the habits of grace strengthened, and the exercises of it lively. And the more lively the exercises of grace are, the more likely will they be to be seen. Besides, this is the way to have God manifesting himself to us, as our father and our friend, to have the manifestations and inward testimonies of his love and favor.

But if you live in some way of sin, it is no wonder if that greatly darkens your evidences, as it keeps down the exercises of grace, and hides the light of God's countenance. And it may be that you never will come to a comfortable resolution of that point, whether you be converted or not, until you shall have wholly forsaken the way of sin in which you live.

VI. If you have met with the *frowns of Providence*, perhaps this has been the cause. When you have met with very sore rebukes and chastisements, that way of sin hath probably been your troubler. Sometimes God is exceedingly awful in his dealings with his own people n this world for their sins. Moses and Aaron were not suffered to enter into Canaan because they believed not God, and spake unadvisedly with their lips at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in his dealings with David! What affliction in his family did he send upon him! One of his

sons ravishing his sister, another murdering his brother, and having expelled his father out of his kingdom, openly in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun, defiling his father's concubines on the top of the house, and at last coming to a miserable end? Immediately after this followed the rebellion of Sheba, and he had this uncomfortable circumstance attending the end of his life, that he saw another of his sons usurping the crown.

How awfully did God deal with Eli for living in the sin of not restraining his children from wickedness! He killed his two sons in one day, brought a violent death upon Eli himself, took the ark from him and sent it into captivity, cursed his house forever, and sware that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever, that the priesthood should be taken from him and given to another family, and that there should never be an old man in his family.

Is not some way of sin in which you live the occasion of the frowns and rebukes of Providence which you have met with? True, it is not the proper business of your neighbors to judge you with respect to events of providence. But you yourselves ought to inquire wherefore God is contending with you, Job 9:10.

VII. If *death be terrible to you*, perhaps this is the foundation of it. When you think of dying, you find you shrink back at the thought. When you have any illness, or when there is anything which seems any way to threaten life, you find you are affrighted by it. The thoughts of dying and going into eternity are awful to you. And that although you entertain a hope that you are converted. If you live in some way of sin, probably this is very much the foundation of it. This keeps your minds sensual and worldly, and hinders a lively sense of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. This keeps grace low, and prevents that relish of heavenly enjoyments which otherwise you would have. This prevents your having the comfortable sense of the divine favor and presence. And without that no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

The way to have the prospect of death comfortable, and to have undisturbed peace and quiet when we encounter death, is to walk closely with God, and to be undefiled in the way of obedience to the commands

of God. And that it is otherwise sometimes with truly godly persons, is doubtless frequently owing to their living in ways displeasing to God.

VIII. If you find by these things which have been proposed to you that you have lived in a way of sin, consider that if you henceforward live in the same way, you will live in *known* sin. Whether in time past it have been known sin or not, though you may have hitherto lived in it through ignorance or inadvertence, yet if now you be sensible of it, henceforward, if you continue in it still, it will not be a sin of *ignorance*, but you will be proved to be of that class of men who live *in ways of known sin*.

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The Vain Self-Flatteries of the Sinner

"For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." [Psalm 36:2]

In the foregoing verse, David says, that the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes;" that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him, that he was not afraid of those terrible judgments, and of that wrath with which God hath threatened sinners If he were afraid of these he could never go on so securely in sin, as he doth.

In our text he gives the reason why the wicked did not fear. It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatenings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But saith the Psalmist, They flatter themseIves in their own eyes: They have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgments; and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner he proceeds, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue: He loves it, and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds, by experience, that it is bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commission of sin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he cannot endure. Proverbs xxiii. 32. "At last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder."

Here observe,

1. The subject spoken of is the WICKED MAN, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking in the foregoing verse.

2. His action in flattering himself in his own eyes; i.e. he makes himself and his case to appear to himself, or in his own eyes, better than it is.

3. How long he continues so to do, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 'Which may be taken for his sin itself, the wicked will see how odious sin is to God', when he shall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and saints; or rather the cause is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulness and feel the terribleness of the FRUIT of his iniquity.

DOCTRINE

Wicked men generally flatter themselves with hopes of escaping punishment, till it actually comes upon them.

There are but few sinners who despair, who give up the cause and conclude with themselves, that they shall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be feared that men go to hell every day out of this country; yet very few of them suffer themselves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that punishment. They go on sinning and travelling in the direct road to the pit; yet by one mean or other they persuade themselves that they shall never fall into it,
In my present discourse, I shall,

1. Mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of impunity.
2. Mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in that hope.
3. Show that sinners generally go on flattering themselves, till punishment actually overtakes them.

I. I am to mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of future impunity.

1. We are so taught in the word of God. Beside our text, you may see, Deuteronomy xxix. 18, 19. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God. Lest there should he among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, "and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Where it is supposed that they whose hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bless themselves in their hearts, saying, WE SHALL HAVE PEACE.

See also Psalm xlix. 17,18. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: His glory shall not descend after him, though while he lived, he BLESSED HIS SOUL." And Psalm 1:21. "These things thou hast done. and I kept silence: Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee."

2. It is very evident, that sinners flatter themselves that they shall escape punishment, by this, that otherwise they would be in dreadful and continual distress. Otherwise, as long as they are in sin, they could never live and go about so cheerfully as they now do: Their lives would be filled with sorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneasiness and distress; as much as those that are exercised with some violent pain of body. But it is evident that it is not in fact so; it is apparent that men are careless and secure; that they are not much concerned about future punishment, and that they cheerfully pursue their business and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly flatter themselves, that they shall not be eternally miserable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God

3. It is evident that they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall escape punishment, as otherwise they would certainly be restrained at least from many of those sins in which they now live: They would not proceed in wilful courses of sin. The transgression of the wicked convinced the Psalmist, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himself in his own eyes. It would be impossible for men allowedly from day to day to do those very things, which they know are threatened with everlasting

destruction, if they did not some way encourage themselves, they should nevertheless escape that destruction.

II. I shall mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in their own eyes.

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as another world. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and about the eternal judgment; but those things do not seem to them to be real. They never saw any thing of them; they never saw hell, never saw the devils and damned spirits; and therefore are ready to say with themselves, How do I know that there is any such thing as another world? When the beasts die, there is an end of them, and how do I know but that it will be so with me? Perhaps all these things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly devised fables.

Such thoughts are apt to rise in the minds of sinners, and the devil sets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an ease to them; therefore they wish they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they are indeed true. So that they are hardened in the way of sin, by infidelity and atheistical thoughts. Psalm xiv. 1. " The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm xciv. 6, 7. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it,"

2. Some flatter themselves that death is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation; and they think if they earnestly seek it, though it be a great while hence, they shall obtain. Although they see no reason to conclude that they shall live long, and perhaps they do not positively conclude that they shall; yet it doth not come into their minds that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And although they do not absolutely determine that they shall live to old age or to middle age, yet they secretly flatter themselves with such an imagination. They are disposed to believe so, and do so far believe it, that they act upon it and run the venture of it.

Men will believe that things will be as they choose to have them, without

reason, and sometimes without the appearance of reason, as is most apparent in this case, Psalm xlix. 11. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

The prepossession and desire of men to have it so, is the principal thing that makes them believe so. However, there are several other things which they use as arguments to flatter themselves. Perhaps they think with themselves, that since they are at present in health, or in youth, or that since they are useful men, do a great deal of good, and both them selves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very soon.

If they shall live many years in the world, they think that it is very probable they shall be converted before they die; as they expect hereafter to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And by some means or other, they think they shall get through their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themselves that they lead moral and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned. They think with themselves that they live not in any vice, that they take care to wrong no man, are just and honest dealers, that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanness, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath strictly, are constant attendants on the public worship, and maintain the worship of God in their families. Therefore they hope that God will not cast them into hell. They see not why God should be so angry with them as that would imply, seeing they are so orderly and regular in their walk; they see not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they have angered him, they imagine they have also done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be necessary that they should experience any other conversion in order to their salvation, they hope that their orderly and strict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope that surely God will not see those that live as they do go to hell. Thus they flatter themselves, as those we read of. Luke xviii. 9. "That trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

4. Some make the advantages under which they live an occasion of self flattery. They flatter themselves, because they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. Thus they abuse the grace of God to their destruction; they do that which the scriptures call despising the riches of God's goodness: Romans ii. 4. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Some flatter themselves, because they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earnestly prayed for them, they hope that their prayers will be heard; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their souls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham: John viii. 33. they make their boast. "We be Abraham's seed; and in verse 39. "Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themselves with their own intentions. They intend to neglect themselves, and give themselves liberty for a while longer, and then to reform. Though now they neglect their souls, and are going on in sin; yet they intend ere long to bestir themselves, to leave off their sins, and to set themselves to seek God. They hear that there is great encouragement for those who earnestly seek God, that they shall find him. So they intend to do; they propose to seek with a great deal of earnestness. They are told, that there are many who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who shall not be able; but they intend, not only to seek, but To STRIVE However, for the present they allow themselves in their ease, sloth, and pleasure, minding only earthly things.

Or if they should be seized with some mortal distemper, and should draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earnestly they would pray and cry to God for mercy; and as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of sinners, they hence flatter themselves that they shall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few who are sinners, and know themselves to be such, who do not encourage themselves with intentions of future repentance and

reformation; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest set themselves to seek God some time or other. Hell is full of GOOD INTENDERS who never proved to be TRUE PERFORMERS: Acts xxiv. 25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

6. There are some who flatter themselves, that they do and have done, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain, when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted They think they are striving, when they neglect many moral and some instituted duties; nor do they exert themselves as if it were for their lives; they are not violent for the kingdom of leaven.

There are doubtless many such; many are concerned, and are seeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that thy will prove at last to be some of the foolish virgins, and be found without oil in their vessels.

7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of themselves. They have a secret imagination, that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do them selves that which is the work of God. Many who are now seeking have this imagination, and labor, reach, pray, hear sermons and go to private meetings, with the view of making themselves holy, and of working in themselves holy affections.

Many, who only project and design to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an easy thing to be converted, that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they shall earnestly set themselves to it.

8. Some sinners flatter themselves that they are already converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more: Revelation iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have

need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

III. Sinners very generally go on flattering themselves in some or other of these ways, till their punishment actually overtakes them.

These are the baits by which Satan catches souls, and draws them into his snare. They are such self flatteries as these that keep men from seeing what danger they are in, and that make them go securely on in the way they are in, "as the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Those that flatter themselves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue so to do till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not; they look upon it as a great way off, when there is but a step between them and death. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at anytime near it. When they were young, they proposed to live a good while longer; and if they happen to live till middle age, they still maintain the same thought, that they are not yet near death; and so that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are just about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteousness, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themselves with their own intentions, till all their prospects are dashed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till such a time; and when that comes, they put it off to another time, until death, which cannot be put off, overtakes them. There are many also that hold a false hope, a persuasion that they belong to God; and as long as they live, by all the marks and signs which are given of a true convert, they never will be persuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themselves, and make themselves easy, till hell fire makes them uneasy. Everlasting ruin comes upon them as a snare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlasting despair: I. Thessalonians v. 3. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman

with child; and they shall not escape."

APPLICATION

1. Hence we learn one reason why there are but few saved, and why so many perish from under the gospel. All men know that they must die, and all that sit under the light of the gospel have been told many a time, that after this there is an other world; that there are but two states in that other world, a state of eternal happiness, and a state of eternal misery; that there is but one way of escaping the misery and obtaining the blessedness of eternity, which is by obtaining an interest in Christ, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an interest in Christ. Yet men are so much given to flatter themselves in those ways which we have mentioned, that there are but few that seasonably take care of their salvation. Indeed they cannot but be in some measure concerned about their souls; yet they flatter themselves with one thing or other, so that they are kept steadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to destruction.

2. Hence we learn the reason why awakening truths of scripture, and awakening sermons, make no more impression upon men. It is in itself a wonderful and surprising thing, that God's denunciations of eternal misery, and threatenings of casting sinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever, do not affect them, do not startle them. But the truth is, they flatter themselves, by such means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful misery is not for them; that they shall escape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not these threatenings to themselves; they seem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there in this congregation, who, for all the awakening sermons they have heard, are yet secure in sin! And who, although they are sensible that they are in a Christless condition, and are still going on in sin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by some means or other they shall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them; yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they shall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, that doth not awaken them, because they flatter themselves with long life. If they be told how

dangerous it is to delay the business of religion, they promise themselves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earnestness than others, and so obtain the end, the salvation of their souls. Others, when they are told that many shall seek who shall not he able to obtain, think surely, that they, having done so much for salvation, shall not be denied.

3. Let every sinner examine himself, whether he do not flatter himself in some of those ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is safe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run such a venture as you do by delaying this necessary work? Is it that you hope there is no such state as heaven or hell, and have a suspicion that there is no God ? Is It this that makes you secure ? Or is it that you are not much afraid but that you shall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind such things? Is it an intention of a future seeking a more convenient season? And are you persuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you shall have so long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious? Are you encouraged to commit sin, because you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his enemies? And do you resolve still to provoke him to anger, because you think he is easily pacified ?

Or do you think that your conversion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you please? Is it because you have been born of godly parents that you are so secure? Or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in so orderly a manner? Or do you think that you are indeed converted already? And doth that encourage you to take a liberty in sinning ? Or are you secure, because you are so stupid as to think nothing about these things? Do you let these concerns wholly alone, and scarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?

Certainly it must be one or more of these things which keeps you in your security, and encourages you to go on in sin. Examine, therefore, and see which of them it is.

4. By the text and doctrine be persuaded to leave off thus flattering

yourselves in your own eyes. You are therein informed, that those who do as you do commonly continue so doing till their punishment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all such flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are sure is the devil's bait: "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," Proverbs i. 17.

You are not only told in the scriptures, that sinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reason may convince you that it is so. For doubtless other sinners have as much ground to hope to escape punishment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to escape. Men under the gospel almost universally think they shall not go to hell: If it were otherwise, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reason to conclude go down from under the preaching of the gospel to the pit of destruction! Now, this is surely enough to convince any sober, prudent person of the folly of such flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately set about his great work with his might. If you could have access to the damned, you would hear many of them curse themselves, for thus flattering themselves while they lived in this world; and you would have the same doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now preached to you from the pulpit.

If your temptation to security be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the being of God, of another world, and an eternal judgment, you may consider, that though that makes you secure at present, yet it will not do always, it will not stand by when you come to die. The fool often in health saith, There is no God; but when he comes to die, he cannot rest in any such supposition. Then he is generally so much convinced in his own conscience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourselves with any supposition now which you will not then be able to hold.

If you depend on long life, consider how many who have depended on the same thing, and had as much reason to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it because you are outwardly of an orderly life and conversation, that

you think you shall be saved ? How unreasonable is it to suppose, that God should be so obliged by those actions, which he knows are not done from the least respect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it because you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you shall some time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourselves and your spiritual interests? And were not the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Christ himself preached the gospel to them, almost continually, and wrought such a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he says, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those cities.

Do you expect you shall be saved, however you neglect yourselves, because you were born of godly parents? hear what Christ saith, Matthew iii. 9. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." Do you flatter yourselves that you shall obtain mercy, though others do not, because you intend hereafter to seek it more earnestly than others? Yet you deceive yourselves, if you think that you intend better than many of those others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earnest seeking, consider, whether or no you do not mind other things yet more? If you imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourselves up to repentance, consider, that you must assuredly give up that imagination before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourselves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourselves the greater liberty in sinning, this is a certain sign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all these ways of flattering yourselves; no longer follow the devil's bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in sin; but immediately and henceforth seek God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

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The Sorrows of the Bereaved Spread Before Jesus

"And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus." -- **Matthew 14:12**

Subject: When anyone is taken away by death that has been eminent in the work of the gospel ministry, 'tis suitable that such as are bereaved thereby should go and spread their sorrows before Jesus.

Concerning these words I would observe three things.

I. On what occasion that was, that we have an account of in the text. It was on occasion of the death of John the Baptist, who was a person whose business it had been to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. He was a minister of Jesus Christ, and had been improved to do great service, was an instrument of much good to many in Judea and Jerusalem, in his lifetime. He was cruelly murdered by Herod, at the instigation of Herodias, having exposed himself to her malice by faithfully reproving them for their incestuous wickedness.

II. We may observe who the persons were spoken of in the text. They were those that had been the disciples of John the Baptist, that had sat at his feet to hear him preach the gospel, that were his constant followers, that were with him as those that received great benefit by his ministry, and were as it were his children.

III. We may observe their behavior on this occasion, consisting in two things.

First, that whereby they showed their regard to the remains of the deceased, *They took up the body and buried it*. It had been used in a barbarous manner, by others, that had also been his hearers, and were under special obligations to have treated him with honor. They cruelly murdered him, by severing his head from his body; and his head was carried in a charger to Herodias, that she, instead of paying that respect that was due to the remains of so venerable a person, might have her

malice and cruelty gratified by such a spectacle, and that she might thence take occasion to insult the dead. While that part of the dead body was thus used by Herodias, his disciples, out of respect and honor to their master and teacher, decently interred the rest.

Second, that which they did, consequent on this, for God's glory and their own good, *They went and told Jesus.* Him they knew to be one that their master John, while he lived, had testified a great regard to. Jesus was he whose forerunner John was; whom he had preached, and of whom he had said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world:" And, "This is he, of whom I said, After me cometh one that is preferred before me;" and whom he saw, and bare record that *this is the Son of God.* And probably they knew that Christ was one that had put great honor upon John their teacher in his lifetime. For he, though he was the Son of God, and John's Maker and Savior, yet came to him to be baptized of him, and had said of him, that "Among those that were born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

It was now a sorrowful time with John's disciples; when they were thus bereaved of him whose teachings they had sat under. And the manner of his death was doubtless very grievous to them. They were like a company of sorrowful, distressed, bereaved children. And what do they do in their sorrows, but go to Jesus with their complaint. The first thing that they do, after paying proper regards to the remains of their dear master, is to go to Christ, to spread their case before him, seeking comfort and help from him. Thus they sought their own benefit.

And probably one end of their immediately going and telling Jesus was, that he, being informed of it, might conduct himself accordingly, as his wisdom should direct, for the interest of his own kingdom. When so great a person as John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was thus martyred, it was a great event, in which the common cause, in which both Christ and he were engaged, was greatly concerned. It was therefore fit that he that was at the head of the whole affair should be informed of it, for his future conduct in the affairs of his kingdom. And accordingly we find that Jesus seems immediately to be influenced in his conduct by these tidings; as you may see in the next verse. "When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by a ship into a desert place apart." Thus John's disciples sought

God's glory.

The observation from the words that I would make the subject of my discourse at this times, is this:

When anyone is taken away by death, that has been eminent in the work of the gospel ministry, such as are thereby bereaved, should go and spread their calamity before Jesus.

Though in handling this subject I might particularly speak to several propositions that are contained in this observation, and many things might profitably be insisted on under it, if there were room for it within the compass of a sermon; yet I shall only give the *reasons of the doctrine,* and then hasten to the application.

The following reasons may be given why, in case of such an awful dispensation of Providence, those that are concerned in it, and bereaved by it, should go and spread their sorrow before Jesus:

1. Christ is one that is ready to pity the afflicted. It is natural for persons that are bereaved of any that are dear to them, and for all under deep sorrow, to seek some that they may declare and lay open their griefs to, that they have good reason to think will pity them, and have a fellow-feeling with them of their distress. The heart that is full of grief wants vent, and desires to pour out its complaint; but it seeks a compassionate friend to pour it out before.

Christ is such an one, above all others. He of old, before his incarnation, manifested himself full of compassion towards his people. For that is Jesus that is spoken of [in] Isa. 63:9, "In all their affliction he was afflicted; and the angel of his presence saved them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." And when he was upon earth in his state of humiliation, he was the most wonderful instance of a tender, pitiful, compassionate spirit, that ever appeared in the world. How often

are we told of his having compassion on one and another! So Mat. 15:32, "Then Jesus called his disciples, and said unto them, I have compassion on the multitude." So he had compassion on the man possessed with devils. Mark 5:19, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done to thee, and hath had compassion on thee." So we read of his pitying the mother, that was bereaved of her son. Luke 7:13. There we have an account, when Christ went into the city of Nain, and met the people carrying out a dead man, the only son of his mother, that was a widow, that when he saw her, he had compassion on her. So when the two blind men that sat by the wayside cried to Jesus, as he passed by, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David," we read that Jesus had compassion on them. Mat. 20:30. So we read of his being moved with compassion. Mat. 14:14, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and when he saw them he was moved with compassion." His speeches to his disciples were full of compassion; especially those that he uttered a little before his death, of which we have an account in the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John. His miracles were almost universally deeds of pity to persons under affliction.

And seeing such a pitiful heart appeared in him on all occasions, no wonder that John's disciples, when bereaved to their dear guide and teacher, and their hearts were full of sorrow, came to him for pity. Which likewise induced Mary and Martha to come and fall down, pouring out their tears at Jesus' feet, when their dear brother Lazarus was dead. Other Jews came to comfort them, before Jesus came, whom they little regarded, but when they heard that Jesus was come, they soon go and spread their sorrows before him. They were assured that he would pity them; and their expectation was not frustrated; for he was most tenderly affected and moved at their tears. We are told that on that occasion he groaned in spirit and was troubled. John 11:33. And when he came to the grave, it is observed, and a special note seems to be set upon it, that he wept, verse 35.

He was one that wept with those that wept. And indeed it was mere pity that brought him into the world, and induced him not only to shed tears but to shed his blood. He poured out his blood as water on the earth, out of compassion to the poor, miserable children of men. And when do we

ever read of any one person coming to him when on earth, with a heavy heart, or under any kind of sorrow or distress for pity or help, but what met with a kind and compassionate reception?

And he has the *same compassion* now he is *ascended into glory*. There is still the same encouragement for the bereaved ones to go and spread their sorrows before him.

Afflicted persons love to speak of their sorrows to them that have had EXPERIENCE of affliction, and know what sorrow is. But there is none on earth or in heaven that ever had so much experience of sorrow as Christ. Therefore he knows how to pity the sorrowful, and especially may we be confident that he is ready to pity those that are bereaved of a faithful MINISTER, because such a bereavement is a calamity that concerns the *souls of men;* and Christ hath especially shown his pity to men's souls. For it was chiefly for them that he died, to relieve the miseries of the soul especially, is it that he hath provided. And it was from pity to the souls of men that he made that provision for them that he hath done, in appointing such an order of men as GOSPEL MINISTERS, and in sending them forth to preach the gospel. It was because he had compassion on men's souls, that he hath appointed ministers to watch for souls.

2. Christ *has purchased all that persons need under such a bereavement*. He has purchased all that miserable men stand in need of under all their calamities, and comfort under every sort of affliction. And therefore that his invitation to those that "Labour and are heavy laden," with either natural or moral evil: he has purchased divine cordials and supports for those hearts that are ready to sink: he has purchased all needed comfort and help for the widow and the fatherless: he has purchased a sanctified improvement and fruit of affliction, for all such as come to him, and spread their sorrows before him. He has purchased those things that are sufficient to make up their loss, that are bereaved of a great blessing in an eminent minister of the gospel. It is he that has purchased those divine blessings, those influences and fruits of the Spirit of God, that the work of the ministry is appointed to be the means of. Faithful ministers

themselves are the fruits of his purchase; and he has purchased all those gifts and graces whereby ministers do become faithful, eminent, and successful. And therefore when he “ascended up on high, he received such gifts for men.” Eph. 4:8, etc. — So that he has purchased all that is needed to make up for the loss that is sustained by the death of an eminent minister.

3. Christ is able to afford all that help that is needed in such a case. His power and his wisdom are as sufficient as his purpose, and answerable to his compassions. By the bowels of his mercies, the love and tenderness of his heart, he is disposed to help those that are in affliction; and his ability is answerable to his disposition. He is able to support the heart under the heaviest sorrows, and to give light in the darkness. He can divide the thickest cloud with beams of heavenly light and comfort. He is one that gives songs in the night, and turns the shadow of death into the morning. He has power to make up the loss of those that are bereaved by the death of the most eminent minister. His own presence with the bereaved is sufficient. If the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls be present, how much more is this than enough to supply the want of any under shepherd! And then he is able to furnish others with like gifts and graces for that work .

Persons under sorrowful bereavements are ready to go and lay open their sorrows to them that they think will be ready to pity them, though they know they can but pity them, and cannot help them. How much more is here in such a case to induce us to go to Jesus, who is not only so ready to pity, but so able to help, able abundantly more than to fill up the breach, and able to turn all our sorrows into joy!

4. The consideration of the special office of Christ, and the work that he has undertaken for his people, should engage them to go and spread such a calamity, as the bereavement of a faithful and eminent minister, before him. For he is the *Head of the body,* the great Shepherd of the sheep, and Lord of the harvest; that has undertaken the care of the whole church,

and has the absolute government of it in his hands, and the supreme disposal and management of all ecclesiastical affairs; to whom belongs the care of the universal church, and every part of it, with respect to its supply with such guides, officers, and ordinances, as it stands in need of. In case of bereavement of an eminent minister, it was he that sent forth such a minister, appointed him his charge, and furnished him for his work, continued and assisted him in it, and in his own time removed him. And it is he that, in such a case, by his office, has the care of filling up the vacancy, and furnishing, establishing, and assisting successors, and supplying all the wants of bereaved churches. It is surely therefore suitable and natural to go to him in such a case, and spread such a calamity before him.

APPLICATION

I come now to apply what has been said to the SORROWFUL OCCASION of our being thus assembled at this time, even the death of that aged SERVANT of God, who has long been eminent in the work of the gospel ministry in this place.

There are many that may well look on themselves as nearly concerned in this awful providence, and sharers in the bereavement; all of whom should be directed by this doctrine, to go and spread their affliction before Jesus, that compassionate, all-sufficient Head of the church, and Savior of the body, that merciful and faithful High Priest, that knows how to pity the afflicted.

And particularly it now becomes and concerns you, that belong to this *church and congregation,* that are bereaved of your aged and eminent PASTOR and FATHER, that has so long been a great blessing to you, now to go and tell JESUS.

The disciples of John, spoken of in the text, were those that were ordinarily under his instruction, and were his constant hearers, as it has been with you with respect to your aged PASTOR, that is now taken from you. Therefore be exhorted to do as they did. Do not think that you have

finished your duty, when you have taken up his body and buried it, and have shown respect to his memory and remains at his funeral. This is the least part of your duty. That which mainly concerns you under this awful providence, is between Christ and your own souls.

God has now taken away from you an able and faithful minister of the New Testament, one that had long been a FATHER to you, and a FATHER in our Israel, a person of uncommon natural abilities and distinguished learning, a great divine, of very comprehensive knowledge, and of a solid, accurate judgment. — Judiciousness and wisdom were eminently his character. He was one of eminent gifts, qualifying him for all parts of the work of the ministry; and there appeared a savor of holiness in his exercise of those gifts in public and private: so that he improved them as a servant of Christ, and a man of God. He was not negligent of the talents which his Lord had committed to him. You need not be told with what constant diligence he improved them, how studious at home, and how laborious in his public work. He ever devoted himself to the work to which he is called. The ministry which he had received of the Lord, he took heed to fulfill and pursued it with a constant and steadfast, even mind, through all its difficulties.

You know his manner of addressing heaven in his public prayers with you and for you, with what sanctity, humility, faith, and fervency, he seemed to apply himself to the FATHER of lights, from time to time, when he stood in this desk as your mouth to God, and interceding for you, pleading with God through the grace and merits of a glorious MEDIATOR. And you know his manner of applying himself to you, when he came to you, from time to time, in the name of the Lord.

In his PUBLIC ministry, he mainly insisted on the most weighty and important things of religion. He was eminently an evangelical preacher; evangelical subjects seemed to be his delight. CHRIST was the subject of his preaching; and he much insisted on those things that did nearly concern the essence and power of religion; and had a peculiar faculty of judiciously and clearly handling the doctrines he insisted on, and treating properly whatever subject he took in hand; and of selecting the most weighty arguments and motives to enforce and set home those things that concern Christian experience and practice. His subjects were always

weighty, and his manner of treating them peculiarly happy, showing the strength and accuracy of his judgment, and ever breathing for the SPIRIT OF PIETY, and a deep sense of the things he delivered, on his heart. His sermons were none of them mean, but were all solid, wise compositions. His words were none of them vain, but all were weighty.

And you need not be told with what weight the welfare of your souls seemed to lie on his heart, and how he instructed, and reproved, and warned, and exhorted you, with all authority, and with a fatherly tender concern for your eternal good. And with what wisdom he presided in the house of God, and guided its affairs; and also counseled and directed you in private, under your particular soul exercises and difficulties. You know how he has brought you up (for most of you have been trained up from your childhood under his ministry), with what authority, and with what judgment, prudence, and steadiness, he has conducted you, as well as meekness and gentleness. You know his manner of going in and out among you, how exemplary his walk and conversation has been, with what gravity, judgment, and savor of holiness, he has walked before you, as a man of God.

You have enjoyed great advantages for your souls' good, under his ministry. That you had such a minister was your privilege and your honor. He has been an ornament to the town of Hatfield. And his presence and conversation amongst you has been both profitable and pleasant; for though it was such as did peculiarly command AWE and RESPECT, yet it was, at the same time, HUMBLE and CONDESCENDING. It tended both to instruct and entertain those that he conversed with. As a wise man, and endued with knowledge, he *showed out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom*

But now it hath pleased a holy God to take him away from you. You will see his face and hear his voice no more in the land of the living. You will no more have the comfort and benefits of his presence with you, and the exercise of his ministry among you.

Therefore now go to Jesus, the Supreme Head of the church, and *Bishop of souls*. Your pastor is dead, and will not live again till the last day. But Christ, the *chief Shepherd,* though *he was dead, is now alive! And*

behold, he lives forevermore. He ever lives to provide for his church, and to guide and feed his flock. Go to that Jesus whom your deceased pastor preached, and to whom he earnestly invited you while he lived, and give thanks for the many blessings you enjoyed in him. Remember how you have *received and heard,* and *hold fast,* that no man take your crown: ***1*** and go and *humble yourselves also before him,* that you made no better improvement of the ministry of your pastor while he lived. And beg of him a sanctified improvement of his awful hand in taking him away, and that he would help you to remember his warnings and counsels that you too much slighted whilst you had them, lest those warnings and counsels cry against you, and rise up in judgment against you another day, lest you see your pastor, that so affectionately, and earnestly, and so often, and for so long a time, continued to exhort you, and earnestly prayed for you, while he lived, rising up in judgment, and bearing testimony against you, declaring how constantly and laboriously he entreated and called upon you, and how obstinately some of you slighted his counsels; and lest you see him sitting with Christ to judge and condemn you, and adoring his awful justice on your aggravated punishment.

All you that have an interest in JESUS, now go to him on this occasion, and tell him of your bereavement, and beg of him that he would not depart from you; but that he would make up his loss in his own immediate presence. Go to him for your surviving pastor, that he would be with him, and furnish him more and more for, and assist him in, that great work that is now wholly devolved upon him and make him also a *burning and shining light* amongst you; and that you may have of the presence and blessing of JESUS with you, and him.

And now, since I am called to speak in the name of Christ on this solemn occasion, I would apply myself to the near relations of the deceased, who are especially to be looked upon as the bereaved.

God in his holy providence has taken from you one that has been a great blessing, comfort, and honor to you, and deservedly very dear to you, and honored of you. The doctrine we are upon directs you what to do in your present circumstances, *viz.* to go to JESUS, to go and spread your affliction before an all-sufficient Redeemer.

And particularly I would apply myself to the honored relict, who stood in the nearest relation of any to the deceased, whom God by this awful providence has made a sorrowful widow. Suffer me, honored madam, in your great affliction, to exhibit to you a compassionate Redeemer. God has now taken from you that servant of his, that was the nearest and best friend you had in this world, that was your wise and prudent guide, your affectionate and pleasant companion, who was so great a blessing while he lived, to you and your family, and, under Christ, was so much the comfort and support of your life. You see, madam, where your resort must be. Your earthly friends can condole your loss, but cannot make it up to you. We must all confess ourselves to be but miserable comforters. But you may go and tell Jesus, and there you may have both support and reparation. His love and his presence is far beyond that of the nearest and most affectionate earthly friend. Now you are bereaved of your earthly consort, you may go to a spiritual husband, and seek his compassion and his company. He is the fountain of all that wisdom and prudence, that piety, that tender affection and faithful care, that you enjoyed in your departed consort. In him is an infinite fountain of all these things, and of all good. In him you may have light in your darkness, comfort in your sorrow, and fullness of joy and glory in another world, in an everlasting union with your dear, deceased relative, in the glorious presence of the same *Redeemer, in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

This doctrine also directs the bereaved, afflicted children, that are, with hearts full of grief, now mourning over a dear departed father, where to go and what to do. You will no longer have your father's wisdom to guide you, his tender love to comfort and delight you, and his affectionate care to guard and assist you, and his pious and judicious counsels to direct you, and his holy examples set before you, and his fervent, humble, believing prayers with you and for you.

But in the blessed Jesus, your father's Lord and Redeemer, you may have much more than all those things. Your father's virtues that made him so great a blessing to you, were but the image of what is in Christ.

Therefore go to him in your mourning; go and tell Jesus; tell a compassionate Savior what has befallen you. Heretofore you have had an

earthly father to go to, whose heart was full of tenderness to you. But the heart of his Redeemer is much more tender; his wisdom and his love is infinitely beyond that of any earthly parent. Go to him, and then you will surely find comfort. Go to him, and you will find that, though you are bereaved, yet you are not left in any want. You will find that all your wants are supplied, and all your loss made up, and much more than so.

But here I would particularly, in humility, address myself to my honored fathers, the sons of the deceased, that are improved in the same great work of the gospel ministry, or in other public business for the service of their generation. Honored sirs, though it might be more proper for me to come to you for instruction and counsel, than to take it upon me to exhort you, yet as I am one that ought to have a fellow-feeling of your affliction, and to look on myself as a sharer in it, and as you have desired me to speak in the name of Christ, on this occasion, suffer me to mention to you that source of comfort, that infinite fountain of good, one of the larger streams of which has failed by the death of an earthly father, even the blessed Jesus. You will doubtless acknowledge it as an instance of his great goodness to you, that you have been the sons of such a father; being sensible that your reputation and serviceableness in your generation, have been, under Christ, very much owing to the great advantages you have been under, by his instructions, counsels, and education. And is it not fit that children that have *learned of such a faithful servant of Christ,* and been brought up at his feet, now he is dead, should do as John the Baptist's disciples did, *go and tell Jesus?* From whom you may receive comfort under your bereavement, and from whom you may receive more of that Spirit that dwelt in him, and greater degrees of those virtues he derived from Christ, to cause you to shine brighter, and to make you still greater blessings in your generation. Now death has veiled and hid from sight a *star* that shone with *reflected light,* our text and doctrine leads you to the *Sun,* that hath *light in himself,* and shines with infinite, unfailing brightness. And while you go to Jesus, honored sirs, on this occasion for yourselves, I humbly desire your requests to him for us the surviving ministers of this county, that he would be with us, now he has taken from us him that was a father amongst us.

I next would address myself to the surviving pastor of this church. We

may well look upon you, reverend sir, as one in an especial manner concerned in this awful providence, and that has a large share in the bereavement. You doubtless are sensible what reason you have to bless God for the advantage you have had, in serving in the gospel of Christ, so long as you have done, with the venerable person deceased, as a son with a father, enjoying the benefit of his instructions, counsels, and example. And particularly, you will often recollect the affectionate and fatherly counsels he gave you, to diligence and faithfulness in your Lord's work, with encouragement of his protection and assistance to carry you through all difficulties, the last evening of his life. And now, dear sir, God has taken him from you, as he took Elijah from Elisha, and as he took John the Baptist, the New Testament Elijah, from his disciples. Therefore now you are directed what to do, *viz. go and tell Jesus;* as those disciples did. You have now a great work devolved upon you. You have him no more, who, while he lived, was as a father to you, to guide and assist you, and take the burthen of your great work from you. Therefore you have nowhere else to go, but to your great Lord and Master, that has sent you to labor in that part of his vineyard, where his aged, and now departed, servant was employed, to seek strength and wisdom, and divine influence and assistance from him, and a double portion of that Spirit that dwelt in your predecessor.

And lastly, The text I am upon may be of direction to us the surviving ministers of this county, what to do on this sorrowful occasion. God has now taken our father and master from our head. He has removed him that has heretofore, under Christ, been very much *our strength,* that we have been wont to resort to it in difficult cases for instruction and direction, and that used to be amongst us from time to time, in our associations, and that we were wont to behold as the head and ornament of those conventions. ***2*** Where else can we now go but to Jesus, the ever living Head of the whole church, and Lord of the whole harvest, the Fountain of light, our great Lord and Master, that sends all gospel ministers, and on whom they universally depend? Let this awful providence bring us to look to Christ, to seek more of his presence with us; and that HE would preside as head in our associations. Let it bring us to a more immediate and entire dependence upon him, for instruction and direction, in all our difficulties.

Let us on this occasion consider what God has done in this county of late years. It was not many years ago that the county was filled with aged ministers, that were our fathers. *But our fathers, where are they?* What a great alteration is made in a little time, in the churches in this part of the land! ***3*** How frequent of late have been the warnings of this kind that God has given us to prepare to give up our account! Let us go to Jesus, and seek grace of him that we may be faithful while we live, and that he would assist us in our great work, that when we also are called hence, we may *give up our account with joy and not with grief,* and that hereafter we may meet those our fathers, that have gone before us in the faithful labors of the gospel, and that we may shine forth with them, *as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever*.

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The Sole Consideration, that God is God, Sufficient to Still All Objections to His Sovereignty

"Be still, and know that I am God." -- Psalm 46:10

This psalm seems to be a song of the church in a time of great revolutions and desolations in the world. Therefore the church glories in God as her refuge, and strength, and present help, even in times of the greatest troubles and overturnings, verses 1-3, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” The church makes her boast of God, not only as being her help, by defending her from the desolations and calamities in which the rest of the world were involved, but also by supplying her, as a never-failing river, with refreshment, comfort, and

joy, in the times of public calamities. See verse 4, 5, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.”

In the 6th and 8th verses are set forth the terrible changes and calamities which were in the world: “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of God, what desolations he hath made in the earth.” In the verse preceding the text is elegantly set forth the manner in which God delivers the church from these calamities, and especially from the desolations of war, and the rage of their enemies: “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire;” *i.e.* he maketh wars to cease when they are against his people; he breaketh the bow when bent against his saints.

Then follow the words of the text: “Be still, and know that I am God.” The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God*. For, says he, “I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.”

In the words may be observed:

1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words*; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves, and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behavior, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to *the inward frame of our hearts*, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, *viz. the divinity of God*. His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be still before him, in no

wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfill this duty, of being still before God, *viz*. with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we know him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. — Hence, the bare consideration *that God is God*, may well be sufficient to still all objections and opposition against the divine sovereign dispensations.

This may appear by the following things:

1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being; and it is impossible that he should do amiss. As he is eternal, and receives not his existence from any other, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity. If anything have bounds fixed to it, there must be some cause or reason why those bounds are fixed just where they are. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing must have some cause. And therefore that being which has no cause must be unlimited.

It is most evident by the works of God, that his understanding and power are infinite. For he that hath made all things out of nothing, and upholds, and governs, and manages all things every moment, in all ages, without growing weary, must be of infinite power. He must also be of infinite knowledge; for if he made all things, and upholds and governs all things continually, it will follow, that he knows and perfectly sees all things, great and small, in heaven and earth, continually at one view; which cannot be without infinite understanding.

Being thus infinite in understanding and power, he must also be perfectly holy; for unholiness always argues some defect, some blindness. Where there is no darkness or delusion, there can be no unholiness. It is impossible that wickedness should consist with infinite light. God being infinite in power and knowledge, he must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient. Therefore it is impossible that he should be under any temptation to do anything amiss; for he can have no end in doing it.

When any are tempted to do amiss, it is for selfish ends. But how can an all-sufficient Being, who wants nothing, be tempted to do evil for selfish ends? So that God is essentially holy, and nothing is more impossible than that God should do amiss.

2. As he is God, he is so *great*, that he is infinitely above all comprehension. And therefore it is unreasonable in us to quarrel with his dispensations, because they are mysterious. If he were a being that we could comprehend, he would not be God. It would be unreasonable to suppose any other, than that there should be many things in the nature of God, and in his works and government, to us mysterious, and which we never can fully find out.

What are we? and what do we make of ourselves, when we expect that God and his ways should be upon a level with our understandings? We are infinitely unequal to any such thing, as comprehending God. We may less unreasonably expect that a nutshell should contain the ocean: Job 11:7, etc. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” If we were sensible of the distance which there is between God and us, we should see the reasonableness of that interrogation of the apostle, Rom. 9:20, “Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?”

If we find fault with God’s government, we virtually suppose ourselves fit to be God’s counselors; whereas it becomes us rather, with great humility and adoration, to cry out with the apostle, Rom. 11:33, etc. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” If little children should rise up and find fault with the supreme legislature of a nation, or quarrel with the mysterious administrations of the sovereign, would it not be looked upon that they meddled with things too high for them? And what are we but babes? Our understandings are infinitely less than those of babes, in comparison with the wisdom of God.

It becomes us therefore to be sensible of it, and to behave ourselves accordingly. Psa. 131:1, 2, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child.” This consideration alone of the infinite distance between God and us, and between God’s understanding and ours, should be enough to still and quiet us concerning all that God does, however mysterious and unintelligible to us. — Nor have we any right to expect, that God should particularly explain to us the reason of his dispensations. It is fit that God should not give any account of his matters to us, worms of the dust, that we may be sensible of our distance from him, and adore and submit to him in humble reverence.

Therefore we find, that when Job was so full of difficulty about the divine dispensations, God did not answer him by particularly explaining the reasons of his mysterious providence; but by showing him what a poor worm, what a nothing he was, and how much he himself was above him. This more became God than it would have done, to enter into a particular debate with him, or to unfold the mysterious difficulties. It became Job to submit to God in those things that he could not understand, and to this the reply tended to bring him. It is fit that God should dwell in thick darkness, or in light to which no man can approach, which no man hath seen nor can see. No wonder that a God of infinite glory shines with a brightness too strong and mighty for mortal eyes. For the angels themselves, those mighty spirits, are represented as covering their faces in this light; Isa. 6.

3. As he is God, all things are his *own*, and he hath a right to dispose of them according to his own pleasure. All things in this lower world are his; Job 41:11, “Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” Yea, the whole universe is God’s; Deu. 10:14, “Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord’s; the earth also with all that is therein.” All things are his, because all things are from him; they are wholly from him, and from him alone. Those things which are made by men, are not wholly from them. When a man builds a house, it is not wholly from him. Nothing of which the house is made has its being from him. But all creatures are wholly and entirely the fruits of God’s power, and therefore

it is fit that they should be subject to, and for, his pleasure. Pro. 16:4 — And as all things are *from* God, so they are upheld in being *by* him, and would sink into nothing in a moment, if he did not uphold them. And all things are *to* him. Rom. 11:36, "For by him, and through him, and *to* him are all things." Col. 1:16, 17, "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers: all things were created *by* him and *for* him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." All mankind are his; their lives, and breath, and being; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Our souls and capacities are from him. Eze. 18:4, "All souls are mine: as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, is mine."

4. In that he is God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things. Sometimes men are the owners of more than they are worthy of. But God is not only the owner of the whole world, as all is from and dependent on him; but such is his perfection, the excellency and dignity of his nature, that he is worthy of sovereignty over all. No man ought in the temper of his mind to be opposite to God's exercising the sovereignty of the universe, as if he were not worthy of it; for to be the absolute sovereign of the universe is not a glory or dignity too great for him. All things in heaven and earth, angels and men, are nothing in comparison with him. All are as the drop of the bucket, and as the light dust of the balance. It is therefore fit that everything should be in his hands, to be disposed of according to his pleasure. — His will and pleasure are of infinitely greater importance than the will of creatures. It is fit that his will should take place, though contrary to the will of all other beings; that he should make himself his own end; and order all things for himself. — God is possessed of such perfections and excellencies as to qualify him to be the absolute sovereign of the world. — Certainly it is more fit that all things be under the guidance of a perfect unerring wisdom, than that they should be left to themselves to fall in confusion, or be brought to pass by blind causes. Yea, it is not fit that *any* affairs within the government of God should be left without the direction of his wise providence; least of all, things of the greatest importance.

It is absurd to suppose, that God is *obliged* to keep every creature from

sinning and exposing himself to an adequate punishment. For if so, then it will follow, that there can be no such thing as a *moral government* of God over reasonable creatures. And it would be an absurdity for God to give commands; for he himself would be the party bound to see to the performance, and there could be no use of promises or threatenings. But if God may leave a creature to sin, and to expose himself to punishment, then it is much fitter and better that the matter should be ordered by wisdom, who should justly lie exposed by sin to punishment, and who not; than that it be left to come to pass by confused chance. It is unworthy of the Governor of the world to leave things to chance; it belongs to him to govern all things by wisdom. — And as God has *wisdom* to qualify him to be sovereign, so he has *power* also to enable him to execute the determinations of wisdom. And he is essentially and invariably *holy* and *righteous*, and infinitely *good*; whereby he is qualified to govern the world in the best manner. — Therefore, when he acts as sovereign of the world, it is fit that we should be still and willingly submit, and in no wise oppose his having the glory of his sovereignty; but should in a sense of his worthiness, cheerfully ascribe it to him, and say, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever;" and say with those in Rev. 5:13, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne."

5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such. He sits on the throne of his sovereignty, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He will be exalted in his sovereign power and dominion, as he himself declares; "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." He will have all men to know, that he is most high over all the earth. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand. — There is no such thing as frustrating, or baffling, or undermining his designs; for he is great in counsel, and wonderful in working. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. Whatsoever God doth, it shall be forever. Nothing shall be put to it, nor anything taken from it. He will work, and who shall let it? He is able to dash in pieces the enemy. If men join hand in hand against him, to hinder or oppose his designs, he breaks the bow, he cuts the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire. — He kills and he makes

alive, he brings down and raises up just as he pleases. Isa. 45:6, 7, “That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.”

Great men, and rich men, and wise men cannot hinder God from doing his pleasure. He leadeth counselors away spoiled, he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor. There are many devices in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. — When he gives quietness, who can make trouble? When he hides his face, who can behold him? He breaketh down, and it cannot be built up again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. When he purposeth, who shall disannul it? And when his hand is stretched out, who shall turn it back? — So there is no hindering God from being sovereign, and acting as such. “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” He hath the keys of hell and of death. He openeth, and no man shutteth: he shutteth, and no man openeth. This may show us the folly of opposing ourselves against the sovereign dispensations of God; and how much more wisely they act who quietly and sweetly submit to his sovereign will.

6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. He is wise of heart, and mighty in strength. Who hath hardened himself against God and prospered? He that will contend with God must answer it. And what a poor creature is man to fight against God! Is he able to make his part good with him? Whoever of God’s enemies deal proudly, he will show that he is above them. They will be but as the chaff before the whirlwind, and shall be as the fat of lambs. They shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away. “Who would set the briers and thorns against him in battle? He would go through them, he would burn them together.” Isa. 27:4.

APPLICATION

A manifold improvement might be made of this doctrine, which a little reflection may suggest to each of us. But the improvement which I shall at this time make of it, shall be only in a *use of reproof* to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of his grace. This doctrine shows the unreasonableness, and dreadful wickedness, of your refusing heartily to own the sovereignty of God in this matter. It shows that you know not *that God is God*. If you knew this, you would be inwardly still and quiet; you would humbly and calmly lie in the dust before a sovereign God, and would see sufficient reason for it.

In objecting and quarreling about the righteousness of God's laws and threatenings, and his sovereign dispensations towards you and others, you oppose his *divinity*, you show your ignorance of his divine greatness and excellency, and that you cannot bear that he should have divine honor. It is from low, mean thoughts of God, that you do in your minds oppose his sovereignty, that you are not sensible how dangerous your conduct is, and what an audacious thing it is for such a creature as man to strive with his Maker.

What poor creatures are you, that you should set up yourselves for judges over the Most High; that you should take it upon [yourself] to call God to an account; that you should say to the great Jehovah, what dost thou? and that you should pass sentence against him! If you knew that he is God, you would not act in this manner. But this knowledge would be sufficient to still and calm you concerning all God's dispensations, and you would say with Eli, in 1 Sam. 3:18, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight." — But here I shall be more particular in several things.

1. It is from *mean thoughts* of God that you are not convinced that you have by your sins deserved his eternal wrath and curse. If you had any proper sense of the infinite majesty, greatness, and holiness of God, you would see, that to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and there to have no rest day nor night, is not a punishment more than equal to the demerit of sin. — You would not have so good a thought of yourselves;

you would not be so clean and pure in your own eyes; you would see that vile, unworthy, hell-deserving creatures you are. If you had not little thoughts of God, and were to consider how you have set yourselves against him — how you have slighted him, his commandments and threatenings, and despised his goodness and mercy, how often you have disobeyed, how obstinate you have been, how your whole lives have been filled up with sin against God — you would not wonder that God threatens to destroy you forever, but would wonder that he hath not actually done it before now.

If you had not mean thoughts of God, you would not find fault with him for not setting his love on you who never exercised any love to him. You would not think it unjust in God not to seek your interest and eternal welfare, who never would be persuaded at all to seek his glory. You would not think it unjust in him to slight and disregard you, who have so often and so long made light of God. If you had not mean thoughts of God, you never would think him obliged to bestow eternal salvation upon you, who have never been truly thankful for one mercy which you have already received of him. — What do you think of yourselves? What great ideas have you of yourselves? And what thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged to do so much for you though you treat him ever so ungratefully for the kindness which he hath already bestowed upon you all the days of your lives? It must be from little thoughts of God, that you think it unjust in him not to regard you when you call upon him; when he hath earnestly called to you, so long and so often, and you would not be persuaded to hearken to him. What thoughts have you of God, that you think he is more obliged to hear what you say to him, than you are to regard what he says to you?

It is from diminutive thoughts of God, that you think he is obliged to show mercy to you when you seek it, though you have been for a long time willfully sinning against him, provoking him to anger, and presuming that he would show you mercy when you should seek it. What kind of thoughts have you of God, that you think he is obliged, as it were, to yield himself up to be abused by men, so that when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace shall not be in his own power, but he must be obliged to dispense them at their call?

2. It is from little thoughts of God, that you quarrel against his justice in the *condemnation of sinners*, from the doctrine of original sin. It must be because you do not know him to be God, and will not allow him to be sovereign. It is for want of a sense how much God is above you, that those things in him which are above your comprehension, are such difficulties and stumbling-blocks to you. It is for want of a sense how much the wisdom and understanding of God are above yours, and what poor, short-sighted, blind creatures you are, in comparison with him. If you were sensible what God is, you would see it most reasonable to expect that his ways should be far above the reason of man, and that he dwells in light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen, nor can see. — If men were sensible how excellent and perfect a Being he is, they would not be so apt to be jealous of him and to suspect him in things which lie beyond their understandings. It would be no difficulty with them to trust God out of sight. What horrid arrogance in worms of the dust, that they should think they have wisdom enough to examine and determine concerning what God doth, and to pass sentence on it as unjust! If you were sensible how great and glorious a being God is, it would not be such a difficulty with you to allow him the dignity of such absolute sovereignty, as that he should order as he pleases, whether every single man should stand for himself, or whether a common father should stand for all.

3. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you trust in your *own righteousness*, and think that God ought to respect you for it. If you knew how great a Being he is, if you saw that he is God indeed, you would see how unworthy, how miserable a present it is to be offered to such a Being. It is because you are blind, and know not what a Being he is with whom you have to do, that you make so much of your own righteousness. If you had your eyes open to see that he is God indeed, you would wonder how you could think to commend yourselves to so great a Being by your gifts, by such poor affections, such broken prayers, wherein is so much hypocrisy, and so much selfishness. — If you had not very mean thoughts of God, you would wonder that ever you could think of purchasing the favor and love of so great a God by your services. You would see that it would be unworthy of God to bestow such a mercy upon you, and peace with him, and his everlasting love, and the enjoyment of himself, for such

a price as you have to offer; and that he would exceedingly dishonor himself in so doing. — If you saw what God is, you would exclaim, as Job did, Job 42:5, 6, "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And as Isaiah did, Isa. 6:5, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is from mean thoughts of God, that you contend with him, because he bestows grace on some, and not on others. Thus God does. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he takes one, and leaves another, of those who are in like circumstances; as it is said of Jacob and Esau, while they were not yet born, and had done neither good nor evil, Rom. 9:10-13. With this sinners often quarrel. But they who upon this ground quarrel with God, suppose him to be *bound* to bestow his grace on sinners. For if he be bound to none, then he may take his choice, and bestow it on whom he pleases. And his bestowing it on some brings no obligation on him to bestow it on others. Has God no right to his own grace? Is it not at his own disposal? And is God incapable of making a gift or present of it to any man? For a person cannot make a present of that which is not his own, or in his own right. It is impossible to *give a debt*.

But what a low thought of God does this argue! Consider what it is you would make of God. Must he be so tied up, that he cannot use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts? Is he obliged to bestow them on one, because it is his pleasure to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right to dispose of his gifts, as a man has of his money? Or is it because God is not so great, and therefore should be more subject, more under bounds, than men? Is not God worthy to have as absolute a propriety in his goods as man has in his? At this rate, God cannot make a present of anything; he has nothing of his own to bestow. If he have a mind to show a peculiar favor to some, to lay some under special obligations, he cannot do it, on the supposition, because his favor is not at his own disposal! The truth is, men have low thoughts of God, or else they would willingly ascribe sovereignty to him in this matter. Mat. 20:15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

God is pleased to show mercy to his enemies, according to his own

sovereign pleasure. And surely it is fit he should. How unreasonable is it to think that God stands bound to his enemies! Therefore consider what you do in quarreling with God, and opposing his sovereignty. Consider with whom it is you contend. Let all who are sensible of their misery, and afraid of the wrath of God, consider these things. Those of you who have been long seeking salvation, but are in great terrors through fear that God will destroy you, consider what you have heard, *be still, and know that he is God*. When God seems to turn a deaf ear to your cries; when he seems to frown upon you; when he shows mercy to others, your equals, or those who are worse, and who have been seeking a less time than you; — be still. Consider who he is that disposes and orders these things. You shall consider it. You shall know it. He will make all men to know that *he is God*. You shall either know it for your good here, by submission, or to your cost hereafter.

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Christ's Agony

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." [Luke 22:44]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his original nature, was infinitely above all suffering, for he was "God over all, blessed for evermore;" but, when he became man, he was not only capable of suffering, but partook of that nature that is remarkably feeble and exposed to suffering. The human nature, on account of its weakness, is in Scripture compared to the grass of the field, which easily withers and decays. So it is compared to a leaf; and to the dry stubble; and to a blast of wind: and the nature of feeble man is said to be but dust and ashes, to have its foundation in the dust,

and to be crushed before the moth. It was this nature, with all its weakness and exposedness to sufferings, which Christ, who is the Lord God omnipotent, took upon him. He did not take the human nature on him in its first, most perfect and vigorous state, but in that feeble forlorn state which it is in since the fall; and therefore Christ is called "a tender plant," and "a root out of a dry ground." Isa. 53:2. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Thus, as Christ's principal errand into the world was suffering, so, agreeably to that errand, he came with such a nature and in such circumstances, as most made way for his suffering; so his whole life was filled up with suffering, he began to suffer in his infancy, but his suffering increased the more he drew near to the close of his life. His suffering after his public ministry began, was probably much greater than before; and the latter part of the time of his public ministry seems to have been distinguished by suffering. The longer Christ lived in the world, the more men saw and heard of him, the more they hated him. His enemies were more and more enraged by the continuance of the opposition that he made to their lusts; and the devil having been often baffled by him, grew more and more enraged, and strengthened the battle more and more against him: so that the cloud over Christ's head grew darker and darker, as long as he lived in the world, till it was in its greatest blackness when he hung upon the cross and cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! Before this, it was exceedingly dark, in the time of his agony in the garden; of which we have an account in the words now read; and which I propose to make the subject of my present discourse. The word agony properly signifies *an earnest strife*, such as is witnessed in wrestling, running, or fighting. And therefore in Luke 13:24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" the word in the original, translated *strive*, is agwnizesqe. "*Agonize*, to enter in at the strait gate." The word is especially used for that sort of strife, which in those days was exhibited in the Olympic games, in which men strove for the mastery in running, wrestling, and other such kinds of exercises; and a prize was set up that was bestowed on the conqueror. Those, who thus contended, were, in the language then in use, said to *agonize*. Thus the apostle in his epistle to the Christians of Corinth, a city of Greece, where such games were

annually exhibited, says in allusion to the strivings of the combatants, "And every man that *striveth for the mastery*," in the original, every one that *agonizeth*, "is temperate in all things." The place where those games were held was called Agwn, or *the place of agony*; and the word is particularly used in Scripture for that striving in earnest prayer wherein persons wrestle with God:they are said *to agonize*, or to *be in agony*, in prayer. So the word is used Rom. 15:30. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive* together with me in your prayers to God for me:" in the original sunagwnizesqai moi, that ye *agonize together* with me. So Col. 4:12. "Always *labouring* fervently for you in prayer, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God:" in the original agwnizwn *agonizing* for you. So that when it is said in the text that Christ was *in an agony*, the meaning is, that his soul was *in a great and earnest strife and conflict*. It was so in two respects:

1. As his soul was in a great and sore conflict with those terrible and amazing views and apprehensions which he then had.

2. As he was at the same time in great labour and earnest strife with God in prayer.

I propose therefore, in discoursing on the subject of Christ's agony, distinctly to unfold it, under these two propositions,

I. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a sore conflict with those terrible and amazing views and apprehensions, of which he was then the subject.

II. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a great and earnest labour and struggle with God in prayer.

I. The soul of Christ in his agony in the garden had a sore conflict with those terrible amazing views and apprehensions, of which he was then the subject.

In illustrating this proposition I shall endeavour to show,

1. What those views and apprehensions were.

2. That the conflict or agony of Christ's soul was occasioned by those views and apprehensions.

3. That this conflict was peculiarly great and distressing; and,

4. What we may suppose to be the special design of God in giving Christ those terrible views and apprehensions, and causing him to suffer that dreadful conflict, before he was crucified.

I proposed to show,

First, What were those terrible views and amazing apprehensions which Christ had in his agony. This may be explained by considering,

1. The cause of those views and apprehensions; and,

2. The manner in which they were then experienced.

1. The cause of those views and apprehensions, which Christ had in his agony in the garden, was the bitter cup which he was soon after to drink on the cross. The sufferings which Christ underwent in his agony in the garden, were not his greatest sufferings; though they were so very great. But his last sufferings upon the cross were his principal sufferings; and therefore they are called "the cup that he had to drink." The sufferings of the cross, under which he was slain, are always in the Scriptures represented as the main sufferings of Christ; those in which especially "he bare our sins in his own body," and made atonement for sin. His enduring the cross, his humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, is spoken of as the main thing wherein his sufferings appeared. This is the cup that Christ had set before him in his agony. It is manifest that Christ had this in view at this time, from the prayers which he then offered. According to Matthew, Christ made three prayers that evening while in the garden of Gethsemane, and all on this one subject, the bitter cup that he was to drink. Of the first, we have an account in Matt. 26:39. "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from

me; nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt:" of the second in the 42d verse, "He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done:" and of the third in the 44th verse, "And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." From this it plainly appears what it was of which Christ had such terrible views and apprehensions at that time. What he thus insists on in his prayers, shows on what his mind was so deeply intent. It was his sufferings on the cross, which were to be endured the next day, when there should be darkness over all the earth, and at the same time a deeper darkness over the soul of Christ, of which he had now such lively views and distressing apprehensions.

2. The manner in which this bitter cup was now set in Christ's view.

(1.) He had a lively apprehension of it impressed at that time on his mind. He had an apprehension of the cup that he was to drink before. His principal errand into the the world was to drink that cup, and he therefore was never unthoughtful of it, but always bore it in his mind, and often spoke of it to his disciples. Thus Matt. 16:21. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day ." Again ch. 20:17, 18, 19. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." The same thing was the subject of conversation on the mount with Moses and Elias when he was transfigured. So he speaks of his bloody baptism, Luke 12:50. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He speaks of it again to Zebedee's children, Matt. 20:22. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able." He spake of his being lifted up. John 8:28. 'Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of

myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things ." John 12:34. "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?" So he spake of destroying the temple of his body, John 2:19. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ." And he was very much in speaking of it a little before his agony, in his dying counsels to his disciples in the 12th and 13th ch. of John. Thus this was not the first time that Christ had this bitter cup in his view. On the contrary, he seems always to have had it in view. But it seems that at this time God gave him an extraordinary view of it. A sense of that wrath that was to be poured out upon him, and of those amazing sufferings that he was to undergo, was strongly impressed on his mind by the immediate power of God; so that he had far more full and lively apprehensions of the bitterness of the cup which he was to drink than he ever had before, and these apprehensions were so terrible, that his feeble human nature shrunk at the sight, and was ready to sink.

2. The cup of bitterness was now represented as just at hand. He had not only a more clear and lively view of it than before; but it was now set directly before him, that he might without delay take it up and drink it; for then, within that same hour, Judas was to come with his band of men, and he was then to deliver up himself into their hands to the end that he might drink this cup the next day; unless indeed he refused to take it, and so made his escape from that place where Judas would come; which he had opportunity enough to do if he had been so minded. Having thus shown what those terrible views and apprehensions were which Christ had in the time of his agony; I shall endeavour to show,

II. That the conflict which the soul of Christ then endured was occasioned by those views and apprehensions.

The sorrow and distress which his soul then suffered, arose from that lively, and full, and immediate view which he had then given him of that cup of wrath; by which God the Father did as it were set the cup down before him, for him to take it and drink it. Some have inquired, what was the occasion of that distress and agony, and many speculations there have been about it, but the account which the Scripture itself gives us is

sufficiently full in this matter, and does not leave room for speculation or doubt. The thing that Christ's mind was so full of at that time was, without doubt, the same with that which his mouth was so full of: it was the dread which his feeble human nature had of that dreadful cup, which was vastly more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. He had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer. This was the thing that filled his soul with sorrow and darkness, this terrible sight as it were overwhelmed him. For what was that human nature of Christ to such mighty wrath as this? it was in itself, without the supports of God, but a feeble worm of the dust, a thing that was crushed before the moth, none of God's children ever had such a cup set before them, as this first being of every creature had. But not to dwell any longer on this, I hasten to show,

III. That the conflict in Christ's soul, in this view of his last sufferings, was dreadful, beyond all expression or conception. This will appear,

1. From what is said of its dreadfulness in the history. By one evangelist we are told, (Matt. 26:37.) "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy; and by another, (Mark 14:33.) "And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." These expressions hold forth the intense and overwhelming distress that his soul was in. Luke's expression in the text of his being in an agony, according to the signification of that word in the original, implies no common degree of sorrow, but such extreme distress that his nature had a most violent conflict with it, as a man that wrestles with all his might with a strong man, who labours and exerts his utmost strength to gain a conquest over him.

2. From what Christ himself says of it, who was not wont to magnify things beyond the truth. He says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Matt. 26:38. What language can more strongly express the most extreme degree of sorrow? His soul was not only "sorrowful," but "exceeding sorrowful;" and not only so, but because that did not fully

express the degree of his sorrow, he adds, "even unto death;" which seems to intimate that the very pains and sorrows of hell, of eternal death, had got hold upon him. The Hebrews were wont to express the utmost degree of sorrow that any creature could be liable to by the phrase, *the shadow of death*. Christ had now, as it were, the shadow of death brought over his soul by the near view which he had of that bitter cup that was now set before him.

3. From the effect which it had on his body, in causing that bloody sweat that we read of in the text. In our translation it is said, that "his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." The word rendered *great drops*, is in the original qromboi, which properly signifies lumps or clots; for we may suppose that the blood that was pressed out through the pores of his skin by the violence of that inward struggle and conflict that there was, when it came to be exposed to the cool air of the night, congealed and stiffened, as is the nature of blood, and so fell off from him not in drops, but in clots. If the suffering of Christ had occasioned merely a violent sweat, it would have shown that he was in great agony; for it must be an extraordinary grief and exercise of mind that causes the body to be all of a sweat abroad in the open air, in a cold night as that was, as is evident from John 18:18. "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, (for it was cold,) and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." This was the same night in which Christ had his agony in the garden. But Christ's inward distress and grief was not merely such as caused him to be in a violent and universal sweat, but such as caused him to sweat blood. The distress and anguish of his mind was so unspeakably extreme as to force his blood through the pores of his skin, and that so plentifully as to fall in great clots or drops from his body to the ground. I come now to show,

IV. What may be supposed to be the special end of God's giving Christ beforehand these terrible views of his last sufferings; in other words, why it was needful that he should have a more full and extraordinary view of the cup that he was to drink, a little before he drank it, than ever he had before; or why he must have such a foretaste of the wrath of God to be endured on the

cross, before the time came that he was actually to endure it.

Answer. It was needful, in order that he might take the cup and drink it, as knowing what he did. Unless the human nature of Christ had had an extraordinary view given him beforehand of what he was to suffer, he could not, as man, fully know beforehand what he was going to suffer, and therefore could not, as man, know what he did when he took the cup to drink it, because he would not fully have known what the cup was--it being a cup that he never drank before. If Christ had plunged himself into those dreadful sufferings, without being fully sensible beforehand of their bitterness and dreadfulness, he must have done he knew not what. As man, he would have plunged himself into sufferings of the amount of which he was ignorant, and so have acted blindfold; and of course his taking upon him these sufferings could not have been so fully his own act. Christ, as God, perfectly knew what these sufferings were; but it was more needful also that he should know as man; for he was to suffer as man, and the act of Christ in taking that cup was the act of Christ as God man. But the man Christ Jesus hitherto never had had experience of any such sufferings as he was now to endure on the cross; and therefore he could not fully know what they were beforehand, but by having an extraordinary view of them set before him, and an extraordinary sense of them impressed on his mind. We have heard of tortures that others have undergone, but we do not fully know what they were, because we never experienced them; and it is impossible that we should fully know what they were but in one of these two ways, either by experiencing them, or by having a view given of them, or a sense of them impressed in an extraordinary way. Such a sense was impressed on the mind of the man Christ Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, of his last sufferings, and that caused his agony. When he had a full sight given him what that wrath of God was that he was to suffer, the sight was overwhelming to him; it made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Christ was going to be cast into a dreadful furnace of wrath, and it was not proper that he should plunge himself into it blindfold, as not knowing how dreadful the furnace was. Therefore that he might not do so, God first brought him and set him at the mouth of the furnace, that he might look in, and stand and view its fierce and raging flames, and might see where he was going, and might voluntarily enter into it and bear it for sinners, as knowing

what it was. This view Christ had in his agony. Then God brought the cup that he was to drink, and set it down before him, that he might have a full view of it, and see what it was before he took it and drank it. If Christ had not fully known what the dreadfulness of these sufferings was, before he took them upon him, his taking them upon him could not have been fully his own act as man; there could have been no explicit act of his will about that which he was ignorant of; there could have been no proper trial, whether he would be willing to undergo such dreadful sufferings or not, unless he had known beforehand how dreadful they were; but when he had seen what they were, by having an extraordinary view given him of them, and then undertaken to endure them afterwards; then he acted as knowing what he did; then his taking that cup, and bearing such dreadful sufferings, was properly his own act by an explicit choice; and so his love to sinners, in that choice of his, was the more wonderful, as also his obedience to God in it. And it was necessary that this extraordinary view that Christ had of the cup he was to drink should be given at that time, just before he was apprehended. This was the most proper season for it, just before he took the cup, and while he yet had opportunity to refuse the cup; for before he was apprehended by the company led by Judas, he had opportunity to make his escape at pleasure. For the place where he was, was without the city, where he was not at all confined, and was a lonesome, solitary place; and it was the night season; so that he might have gone from that place where he would, and his enemies not have known where to have found him. This view that he had of the bitter cup was given him while he was yet fully at liberty, before he was given into the hands of his enemies. Christ's delivering himself up into the hands of his enemies, as he did when Judas came, which was just after his agony, was properly his act of taking the cup in order to drink; for Christ knew that the issue of that would be his crucifixion the next day. These things may show us the end of Christ's agony, and the necessity there was of such an agony before his last sufferings.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn how dreadful Christ's last sufferings were. We learn it from the dreadful effect which the bare foresight of them had upon him in his agony. His last sufferings were so dreadful, that the view

which Christ had of them before overwhelmed him and amazed him, as it is said he began to be sore amazed. The very sight of these last sufferings was so very dreadful as to sink his soul down into the dark shadow of death; yea, so dreadful was it, that in the sore conflict which his nature had with it, he was all in a sweat of blood, his body all over was covered with clotted blood, and not only his body, but the very ground under him with the blood that fell from him, which had been forced through his pores through the violence of his agony. And if only the foresight of the cup was so dreadful, how dreadful was the cup itself, how far beyond all that can be uttered or conceived! Many of the martyrs have endured extreme tortures, but from what has been said, there is all reason to think those all were a mere nothing to the last sufferings of Christ on the cross. And what has been said affords a convincing argument that the sufferings which Christ endured in his body on the cross, though they were very dreadful, were yet the least part of his last sufferings; and that beside those, he endured sufferings in his soul which were vastly greater. For if it had been only the sufferings which he endured in his body, though they were very dreadful, we cannot conceive that the mere anticipation of them would have such an effect on Christ. Many of the martyrs, for ought we know, have endured as severe tortures in their bodies as Christ did. Many of the martyrs have been crucified, as Christ was; and yet their souls have not been so overwhelmed. There has been no appearance of such amazing sorrow and distress of mind either at the anticipation of their sufferings, or in the actual enduring of them.

2. From what has been said, we may see the wonderful strength of the love of Christ to sinners. What has been said shows the strength of Christ's love two ways.

1. That it was so strong as to carry him through that agony that he was then in. The suffering that he then was actually subject to, was dreadful and amazing, as has been shown; and how wonderful was his love that lasted and was upheld still! The love of any mere man or angel would doubtless have sunk under such a weight, and never would have endured such a conflict in such a bloody sweat as that of Jesus Christ. The anguish of Christ's soul at that time was so strong as to cause that wonderful effect on his body. But his love to his enemies, poor and unworthy as they were,

was stronger still. The heart of Christ at that time was full of distress, but it was fuller of love to vile worms: his sorrows abounded, but his love did much more abound. Christ's soul was overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, but this was from a deluge of love to sinners in his heart sufficient to overflow the world, and overwhelm the highest mountains of its sins. Those great drops of blood that fell down to the ground were a manifestation of an ocean of love in Christ's heart.

2. The strength of Christ's love more especially appears in this, that when he had such a full view of the dreadfulness of the cup that he was to drink, that so amazed him, he would notwithstanding even then take it up, and drink it. Then seems to have been the greatest and most peculiar trial of the strength of the love of Christ, when God set down the bitter portion before him, and let him see what he had to drink, if he persisted in his love to sinners; and brought him to the mouth of the furnace that he might see its fierceness, and have a full view of it, and have time then to consider whether he would go in and suffer the flames of this furnace for such unworthy creatures, or not. This was as it were proposing it to Christ's last consideration what he would do; as much as if it had then been said to him, 'Here is the cup that you are to drink, unless you will give up your undertaking for sinners, and even leave them to perish as they deserve. Will you take this cup, and drink it for them, or not? There is the furnace into which you are to be cast, if they are to be saved; either they must perish, or you must endure this for them. There you see how terrible the heat of the furnace is; you see what pain and anguish you must endure on the morrow, unless you give up the cause of sinners. What will you do? is your love such that you will go on? Will you cast yourself into this dreadful furnace of wrath?' Christ's soul was overwhelmed with the thought; his feeble human nature shrunk at the dismal sight. It put him into this dreadful agony which you have heard described; but his love to sinners held out. Christ would not undergo these sufferings needlessly, if sinners could be saved without. If there was not an absolute necessity of his suffering them in order to their salvation, he desired that the cup might pass from him. But if sinners, on whom he had set his love, could not, agreeably to the will of God, be saved without his drinking it, he chose that the will of God should be done. He chose to go on and endure the suffering, awful as it appeared to him. And this was

his final conclusion, after the dismal conflict of his poor feeble human nature, after he had had the cup in view, and for at least the space of one hour, had seen how amazing it was. Still he finally resolved that he would bear it, rather than those poor sinners whom he had loved from all eternity should perish. When the dreadful cup was before him, he did not say within himself, why should I, who am so great and glorious a person, infinitely more honourable than all the angels of heaven, Why should I go to plunge myself into such dreadful, amazing torments for worthless wretched worms that cannot be profitable to God, or me, and that deserve to be hated by me, and not to be loved? Why should I, who have been living from all eternity in the enjoyment of the Father's love, go to cast myself into such a furnace for them that never can requite me for it? Why should I yield myself to be thus crushed by the weight of divine wrath, for them who have no love to me, and are my enemies? they do not deserve any union with me, and never did, and never will do, any thing to recommend themselves to me. What shall I be the richer for having saved a number of miserable haters of God and me, who deserve to have divine justice glorified in their destruction? Such, however, was not the language of Christ's heart, in these circumstances; but on the contrary, his love held out, and he resolved even then, in the midst of his agony, to yield himself up to the will of God, and to take the cup and drink it. He would not flee to get out of the way of Judas and those that were with him, though he knew they were coming, but that same hour delivered himself voluntarily into their hands. When they came with swords and staves to apprehend him, and he could have called upon his Father, who would immediately have sent many legions of angels to repel his enemies, and have delivered him, he would not do it; and when his disciples would have made resistance, he would not suffer them, as you may see in Matt. 26:51, and onward: "And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the

temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." And Christ, instead of hiding himself from Judas and the soldiers, told them, when they seemed to be at a loss whether he was the person whom they sought; and when they seemed still somewhat to hesitate, being seized with some terror in their minds, he told them so again, and so yielded himself up into their hands, to be bound by them, after he had shown them that he could easily resist them if he pleased, when a single word spoken by him, threw them backwards to the ground, as you may see in John 18:3, etc. "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." Thus powerful, constant, and violent was the love of Christ; and the special trial of his love above all others in his whole life seems to have been in the time of his agony. For though his sufferings were greater afterwards, when he was on the cross, yet he saw clearly what those sufferings were to be, in the time of his agony; and that seems to have been the first time that ever Christ Jesus had a clear view what these sufferings were; and after this the trial was not so great, because the conflict was over. His human nature had been in a struggle with his love to sinners, but his love had got the victory. The thing, upon a full view of his sufferings, had been resolved on and concluded; and accordingly, when the moment arrived, he actually went through with those sufferings.

But there are two circumstances of Christ's agony that do still make the strength and constancy of his love to sinners the more conspicuous.

1. That at the same time that he had such a view of the dreadfulness of his sufferings, he had also an extraordinary view of the hatefulness of the wickedness of those for whom those sufferings were to make atonement. There are two things that render Christ's love wonderful: 1. That he should be willing to endure sufferings that were so great; and 2. That he should be willing to endure them to make atonement for wickedness that

was so great. But in order to its being properly said, Christ of his own act and choice endured sufferings that were so great, to make atonement for wickedness that was so great, two things were necessary. 1. That he should have an extraordinary sense how great these sufferings were to be, before he endured them. This was given in his agony. And 2. That he should also at the same time have an extraordinary sense how great and hateful was the wickedness of men for which he suffered to make atonement; or how unworthy those were for whom he died. And both these were given at the same time. When Christ had such an extraordinary sense how bitter his cup was to be, he had much to make him sensible how unworthy and hateful that wickedness of mankind was for which he suffered; because the hateful and malignant nature of that corruption never appeared more fully than in the spite and cruelty of men in these sufferings; and yet his love was such that he went on notwithstanding to suffer for them who were full of such hateful corruption.

It was the corruption and wickedness of men that contrived and effected his death; it was the wickedness of men that agreed with Judas, it was the wickedness of men that betrayed him, and that apprehended him, and bound him, and led him away like a malefactor; it was by men's corruption and wickedness that he was arraigned, and falsely accused, and unjustly judged. It was by men's wickedness that he was reproached, mocked, buffeted, and spit upon. It was by men's wickedness that Barabbas was preferred before him. It was men's wickedness that laid the cross upon him to bear, and that nailed him to it, and put him to so cruel and ignominious a death. This tended to give Christ an extraordinary sense of the greatness and hatefulness of the depravity of mankind.

1. Because hereby in the time of his sufferings he had that depravity set before him as it is, without disguise. When it killed Christ, it appeared in its proper colours. Here Christ saw it in its true nature, which is the utmost hatred and contempt of God; in its ultimate tendency and desire, which is to kill God; and in its greatest aggravation and highest act, which is killing a person that was God.

2. Because in these sufferings he felt the fruits of that wickedness. It was then directly levelled against himself, and exerted itself against him to

work his reproach and torment, which tended to impress a stronger sense of its hatefulness on the human nature of Christ. But yet at the same time, so wonderful was the love of Christ to those who exhibited this hateful corruption, that he endured those very sufferings to deliver them from the punishment of that very corruption. The wonderfulness of Christ's dying love appears partly in that he died for those that were so unworthy in themselves, as all mankind have the same kind of corruptions in their hearts, and partly in that he died for those who were not only so wicked, but whose wickedness consists in being enemies to him; so that he did not only die for the wicked, but for his own enemies; and partly in that he was willing to die for his enemies at the same time that he was feeling the fruits of their enmity, while he felt the utmost effects and exertions of their spite against him in the greatest possible contempt and cruelty towards him in his own greatest ignominy, torments, and death; and partly in that he was willing to atone for their being his enemies in these very sufferings, and by that very ignominy, torment, and death that was the fruit of it. The sin and wickedness of men, for which Christ suffered to make atonement, was, as it were, set before Christ in his view.

1. In that this wickedness was but a sample of the wickedness of mankind; for the corruption of all mankind is of the same nature, and the wickedness that is in one man's heart is of the same nature and tendency as in another's. As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

2. It is probable that Christ died to make atonement for that individual actual wickedness that wrought his sufferings, that reproached, mocked, buffeted, and crucified him. Some of his crucifiers, for whom he prayed that they might be forgiven, while they were in the very act of crucifying him, were afterwards, in answer to his prayer, converted, by the preaching of Peter; as we have an account of in the 2d chapter of Acts.

2. Another circumstance of Christ's agony that shows the strength of his love, is the ungrateful carriage of his disciples at that time. Christ's disciples were among those for whom he endured this agony, and among those for whom he was going to endure those last sufferings, of which he now had such dreadful apprehensions. Yet Christ had already given them an interest in the benefits of those sufferings. Their sins had already been

forgiven them through that blood that he was going to shed, and they had been infinite gainers already by that dying pity and love which he had to them, and had through his sufferings been distinguished from all the world besides. Christ had put greater honour upon them than any other, by making them his disciples in a more honourable sense than he had done any other. And yet now, when he had that dreadful cup set before him which he was going to drink for them, and was in such an agony at the sight of it, he saw no return on their part but indifference and ingratitude. When he only desired them to watch with him, that he might be comforted in their company, now at this sorrowful moment they fell asleep; and showed that they had not concern enough about it to induce them to keep awake with him even for one hour, though he desired it of them once and again. But yet this ungrateful treatment of theirs, for whom he was to drink the cup of wrath which God had set before him, did not discourage him from taking it, and drinking it for them. His love held out to them; having loved his own, he loved them to the end. He did not say within himself when this cup of trembling was before him, Why should I endure so much for those that are so ungrateful; why should I here wrestle with the expectation of the terrible wrath of God to be borne by me to-morrow, for them that in the mean time have not so much concern for me as to keep awake with me when I desire it of them even for one hour? But on the contrary, with tender and fatherly compassions he excuses this ingratitude of his disciples, and says, Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" and went and was apprehended, and mocked, and scourged, and crucified, and poured out his soul unto death, under the heavy weight of God's dreadful wrath on the cross for them.

3d Inference. From what has been said, we may learn the wonderfulness of Christ's submission to the will of God. Christ, as he was a divine person, was the absolute sovereign of heaven and earth, but yet he was the most wonderful instance of submission to God's sovereignty that ever was. When he had such a view of the terribleness of his last sufferings, and prayed if it were possible that that cup might pass from him, i.e. if there was not an absolute necessity of it in order to the salvation of sinners, yet it was with a perfect submission to the will of God. He adds, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." He chose rather that the

inclination of his human nature, which so much dreaded such exquisite torments, should be crossed, than that God's will should not take place. He delighted in the thought of God's will being done; and when he went and prayed the second time, he had nothing else to say but, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done;" and so the third time. What are such trials of submission as any of us sometimes have in the afflictions that we suffer in comparison of this? If God does but in his providence signify it to be his will that we should part with a child, how hardly are we brought to yield to it, how ready to be unsubmissive and froward! Or if God lays his hand upon us in some acute pain of body, how ready are we to be discontented and impatient; when the innocent Son of God, who deserved no suffering could quietly submit to sufferings inconceivably great, and say it over and over, God's will be done! When he was brought and set before that dreadful furnace of wrath into which he was to be cast, in order that he might look into it and have a full view of its fierceness, when his flesh shrunk at it, and his nature was in such a conflict, that his body was all covered with a sweat of blood falling in great drops to the ground, yet his soul quietly yielded that the will of God should be done, rather than the will or inclination of his human nature.

4th Infer. What has been said on this subject also shows us the glory of Christ's obedience. Christ was subject to the moral law as Adam was, and he was also subject to the ceremonial and judicial laws of Moses; but the principal command that he had received of the Father was, that he should lay down his life, that he should voluntarily yield up himself to those terrible sufferings on the cross. To do this was his principal errand into the world; and doubtless the principal command that he received, was about that which was the principal errand on which he was sent. The Father, when he sent him into the world, sent him with commands concerning what he should do in the world; and his chief command of all was about that, which was the errand he was chiefly sent upon, which was to lay down his life. And therefore this command was the principal trial of his obedience. It was the greatest trial of his obedience, because it was by far the most difficult command: all the rest were easy in comparison of this. And the main trial that Christ had, whether he would obey this command, was in the time of his agony; for that was within an hour

before he was apprehended in order to his sufferings, when he must either yield himself up to them, or fly from them. And then it was the first time that Christ had a full view of the difficulty of this command; which appeared so great as to cause that bloody sweat. Then was the conflict of weak human nature with the difficulty, then was the sore struggles and wrestling with the heavy trial he had, and then Christ got the victory over the temptation, from the dread of his human nature. His obedience held out through the conflict. Then we may suppose that Satan was especially let loose to set in with the natural dread that the human nature had of such torments, and to strive to his utmost to dissuade Christ from going on to drink the bitter cup; for about that time, towards the close of Christ's life, was he especially delivered up into the hands of Satan to be tempted of him, more than he was immediately after his baptism; for Christ says, speaking of that time, Luke 22:53. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." So that Christ, in the time of his agony, was wrestling not only with overwhelming views of his last sufferings, but he also wrestled, in that bloody sweat, with principalities and powers -- he contended at that time with the great leviathan that laboured to his utmost to tempt him to disobedience. So that then Christ had temptations every way to draw him off from obedience to God. He had temptations from his feeble human nature, that exceedingly dreaded such torments; and he had temptations from men, who were his enemies; and he had temptations from the ungrateful carriage of his own disciples; and he had temptations from the devil. He had also an overwhelming trial from the manifestation of God's own wrath; when, in the words of Isaiah, it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief. But yet he failed not, but got the victory over all, and performed that great act of obedience at that time to that same God that hid himself from him, and was showing his wrath to him for men's sins, which he must presently suffer. Nothing could move him away from his steadfast obedience to God, but he persisted in saying, "Thy will be done:" expressing not only his submission, but his obedience; not only his compliance with the disposing will of God, but also with his perceptive will. God had given him this cup to drink, and had commanded him to drink it, and that was reason enough with him to drink it; hence he says, at the conclusion of his agony, when Judas came with his band, "The cup which my Father

giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?" John 18:11. Christ, at the time of his agony, had an inconceivably greater trial of obedience than any man or any angel ever had. How much was this trial of the obedience of the second Adam beyond the trial of the obedience of the first Adam! How light was our first father's temptation in comparison of this! And yet our first surety failed, and our second failed not, but obtained a glorious victory, and went and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Thus wonderful and glorious was the obedience of Christ, by which he wrought out righteousness for believers, and which obedience is imputed to them. No wonder that it is a sweet penalty sown, and that God stands ready to bestow heaven as its reward on all that believe on him.

5. What has been said shows us the sottishness of secure sinners in being so fearless of the wrath of God. If the wrath of God was so dreadful, that, when Christ only expected it, his human nature was nearly overwhelmed with the fear of it, and his soul was amazed, and his body all over in a bloody sweat; then how sottish are sinners, who are under the threatening of the same wrath of God, and are condemned to it, and are every moment exposed to it; and yet, instead of manifesting intense apprehension, are quiet and easy, and unconcerned; instead of being sorrowful and very heavy, go about with a light and careless heart; instead of crying out in bitter agony, are often gay and cheerful, and eat and drink, and sleep quietly, and go on in sin, provoking the wrath of God more and more, without any great matter of concern! How stupid and sottish are such persons! Let such senseless sinners consider, that that misery, of which they are in danger from the wrath of God, is infinitely more terrible than that, the fear of which occasioned in Christ his agony and bloody sweat. It is more terrible, both as it differs both in its nature and degree, and also as it differs in its duration. It is more terrible in its nature and degree. Christ suffered that which, as it upheld the honour of the divine law, was fully equivalent to the misery of the damned; and in some respect it was the same suffering; for it was the wrath of the same God; but yet in other respects it vastly differed. The difference does not arise from the difference in the wrath poured out on one and the other, for it is the same wrath, but from the difference of the subject, which may be best illustrated from Christ's own comparison. Luke 23:31. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Here he

calls himself the green tree, and wicked men the dry, intimating that the misery that will come on wicked men will be far more dreadful than those sufferings which came on him, and the difference arises from the different nature of the subject. The green tree and the dry are both cast into the fire; but the flames seize and kindle on the dry tree much more fiercely than on the green. The sufferings that Christ endured differ from the misery of the wicked in hell in nature and degree in the following respects.

1. Christ felt not the gnawings of a guilty, condemning conscience.

2. He felt no torment from the reigning of inward corruptions and lusts as the damned do. The wicked in hell are their own tormentors, their lusts are their tormentors, and being without restraint, (for there is no restraining grace in hell,) their lusts will rage like raging flames in their hearts. They shall be tormented with the unrestrained violence of a spirit of envy and malice against God, and against the angels and saints in heaven, and against one another. Now Christ suffered nothing of this.

3. Christ had not to consider that God hated him. The wicked in hell have this to make their misery perfect, they know that God perfectly hates them without the least pity or regard to them, which will fill their souls with inexpressible misery. But it was not so with Christ. God withdrew his comfortable presence from Christ, and hid his face from him, and so poured out his wrath upon him, as made him feel its terrible effects in his soul; but yet he knew at the same time that God did not hate him, but infinitely loved him. He cried out of God's forsaking him, but yet at the same time calls him "My God, my God!" knowing that he was his God still, though he had forsaken him. But the wicked in hell will know that he is not their God, but their judge and irreconcilable enemy.

4. Christ did not suffer despair, as the wicked do in hell. He knew that there would be an end to his sufferings in a few hours; and that after that he should enter into eternal glory. But it will be far otherwise with you that are impenitent; if you die in your present condition, you will be in perfect despair. On these accounts, the misery of the wicked in hell will be immensely more dreadful in nature and degree, than those sufferings with the fears of which Christ's soul was so much overwhelmed.

2. It will infinitely differ in duration. Christ's sufferings lasted but a few hours, and there was an eternal end to them, and eternal glory succeeded. But you that are a secure, senseless sinner, are every day exposed to be cast into everlasting misery, a fire that never shall be quenched. If then the Son of God was in such amazement, in the expectation of what he was to suffer for a few hours, how sottish are you who are continually exposed to sufferings, immensely more dreadful in nature and degree, and that are to be without any end, but which must be endured without any rest day or night for ever and ever! If you had a full sense of the greatness of that misery to which you are exposed, and how dreadful your present condition is on that account, it would this moment put you into as dreadful an agony as that which Christ underwent; yea, if your nature could endure it, one much more dreadful. We should now see you fall down in a bloody sweat, wallowing in your gore, and crying out in terrible amazement.

Having thus endeavoured to explain and illustrate the former of the two propositions mentioned in the commencement of this discourse, I shall now proceed to show,

II. That the soul of Christ in his agony in the garden was in a great and earnest strife and conflict in his prayer to God.

The labour and striving of Christ's soul in prayer was a part of his agony, and was without doubt a part of what is intended in the text, when it is said that Christ was in an agony; for, as we have shown, the word is especially used in Scripture in other places for striving or wrestling with God in prayer. From this fact, and from the evangelist mentioning his being in agony, and his praying earnestly in the same sentence, we may well understand him as mentioning his striving in prayer as part of his agony. The words of the text seem to hold forth as much as that Christ was in an agony in prayer: "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." This language seems to imply thus much, that the labour and earnestness of Christ's soul was so great in his wrestling with God in prayer, that he was in a mere agony, and all over in a sweat of blood.

What I propose now, in this second proposition, is by the help of God to

explain this part of Christ's agony which consisted in the agonizing and wrestling of his soul in prayer; which is the more worthy of a particular inquiry, being that which probably is but little understood; though, as may appear in the sequel, the right understanding of it is of great use and consequence in divinity. It is not as I conceive ordinarily well understood what is meant when it is said in the text that Christ *prayed more earnestly*; or what was *the thing that he wrestled with God for*, or what was the subject matter of this earnest prayer, or what was the reason of his being so very earnest in prayer at this time. And therefore, to set this whole matter in a clear light, I would particularly inquire,

1. Of what nature this prayer was;

2. What was the subject matter of this earnest prayer of Christ to the Father;

3. In what capacity Christ offered up this prayer to God;

4. Why he was so earnest in his prayer;

5. What was the success of this his earnest wrestling with God in prayer; and then make some improvement.

I. Of what nature this prayer of Christ was.

Addresses that are made to God may be of various kinds. Some are confessions on the part of the individual, or expressions of his sense of his own unworthiness before God, and are thus penitential addresses to God. Others are doxologies or prayers intended to express the sense which the person has of God's greatness and glory. Such are many of the psalms of David. Others are gratulatory addresses, or expressions of thanksgiving and praise for mercies received. Others are submissive addresses, or expressions of submission and resignation to the will of God, whereby he that addresses the Majesty of heaven, expresses the compliance of his will with the sovereign will of God; saying, "Thy will, O Lord, be done!" as David, 2 Sam. 15:26. "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Others are petitory or supplicatory; whereby the person that prays,

begs of God and cries to him for some favour desired of him.

Hence the inquiry is, of which of these kinds was the prayer of Christ, that we read of in the text.

Answer. It was chiefly supplicatory. It was not penitential or confessional; for Christ had no sin or unworthiness to confess. Nor was it a doxology or a thanksgiving or merely an expression of submission; for none of these agree with what is said in the text, *viz.* that he prayed more earnestly. When any one is said to pray earnestly, it implies an earnest request for some benefit, or favour desired; and not merely a confession, or submission, or gratulation. So what the apostle says of this prayer, in Heb. 5:7. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared," shows that it was petitory, or an earnest supplication for some desired benefit. They are not confessions, or doxologies, or thanksgivings. or resignations, that are called *"supplications"* and *"strong cyings,"* but petitions for some benefit earnestly desired. And having thus resolved the first inquiry, and shown that this earnest prayer of Christ -was of the nature of a supplication for some benefit or favour which Christ earnestly desired, I come to inquire,

II. What was the subject matter of this supplication; or what favour and benefit that was for which Christ so earnestly supplicated in this prayer of which we have an account in the text. Now the words of the text are not express on this matter. It is said that Christ, "being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" but yet it is not said what he prayed so earnestly for. And here is the greatest difficulty attending this account: even what that was which Christ so earnestly desired, for which he so wrestled with God at that time. And though we are not expressly told in the text, yet the Scriptures have not left us without sufficient light in this matter. And the more effectually to avoid mistakes, I would answer,

1. Negatively, the thing that Christ so earnestly prayed for at this time, was not that the bitter cup which he had to drink might pass from him. Christ had before prayed for this, as in the next verse but one before the text, saying "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me! nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!" It is after this that we have

an account that Christ being in an agony, prayed more earnestly; but we are not to understand that he prayed more earnestly than he had done before, that the cup might pass from him. That this was not the thing that he so earnestly prayed for in this second prayer, the following things seem to prove:

1. This second prayer was after the angel had appeared to him from heaven, strengthening him, the more cheerfully to take the cup and drink it. The evangelists inform us that when Christ came into the garden, he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy, and that he said his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and that then he went and prayed to God, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him. Luke says in the 41st and 42nd verses, "that being withdrawn from his disciples about a stone's cast, he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!" And then, after this, it is said in the next verse, that there appeared an angel from heaven unto him strengthening him. Now this can be understood no otherwise than that the angel appeared to him, strengthening him and encouraging him to go through his great and difficult work, to take the cup and drink it. Accordingly we must suppose, that now Christ was more strengthened and encouraged to go through with his sufferings: and therefore we cannot suppose that after this he would pray more earnestly than before to be delivered from his sufferings; and of course that it was something else that Christ more earnestly prayed for, after that strengthening of the angel, and not that the cup might pass from him. Though Christ seems to have a greater sight of his sufferings given him after this strengthening of the angel than before, that caused such an agony, yet he was more strengthened to fit him for a greater sight of them, he had greater strength and courage to grapple with these awful apprehensions, than before. His strength to bear sufferings is increased with the sense of his sufferings.

2. Christ, before his second prayer, had had an intimation from the Father, that it was not his will that the cup should pass from him. The angel's coming from heaven to strengthen him must be so understood. Christ first prays, that if it may be the will of the Father, the cup might pass; but not, if it was not his will; and then God immediately upon this

sends an angel to strengthen, and encourage him to take the cup, which was a plain intimation to Christ that it was the Father's will that he should take it, and that it should not pass from him. And so Christ received it; as appears from the account which Matthew gives of this second prayer. Matt. 26:42. "He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He speaks as one that now had had an intimation, since he prayed before, that it was not the will of God. And Luke tells us how, *viz.* by God's sending an angel. Matthew informs us, as Luke does, that in his first prayer, he prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from him; but then God sends an angel to signify that it was not his will, and to encourage him to take it. And then Christ having received this plain intimation that it was not the will of God that the cup should pass from him, yields to the message he had received, and says, O my Father, if it be so as thou hast now signified, thy will be done. Therefore we may surely conclude that what Christ prayed more earnestly for after this, was not that the cup might pass from him, but something else; for he would not go to pray more earnestly that the cup might pass from him, after God had signified that it was not his will that it should pass from him, than he did before; that would be blasphemous to suppose. And then,

3dly, The language of the second prayer, as recited by Matthew, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done," shows that Christ did not then pray that the cup might pass from him. This certainly is not praying more earnestly that the cup might pass: it is rather a yielding that point, and ceasing any more to urge it, and submitting to it as a thing now determined by the will of God, made known by the angel. And,

4. From the apostle's account of this prayer in the 5th ch. of Hebrews, the words of the apostle are these, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up his prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." The strong crying and tears of which the apostle speaks, are doubtless the same that Luke speaks of in the text, when he says, "he being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" for this was the sharpest and

most earnest crying of Christ, of which we have any where any account. But according to the apostle's account, that which Christ feared, and that for which he so strongly cried to God in this prayer, was something that he was heard in, something that God granted him his request in, and therefore it was not that the cup might pass from him. Having thus shown what it was not that Christ prayed for in this earnest prayer, I proceed to show,

2nd, What it was that Christ so earnestly sought of God in this prayer.

I answer in one word, it was, *That God's will might be done, in what related to his sufferings.* Matthew gives this express account of it, in the very language of the prayer which has been recited several times already, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done!" This is a yielding, and an expression of submission; but it is not merely that. Such words, "The will of the Lord be done," as they are most commonly used, are not understood as a supplication or request, but only as an expression of submission. But the words are not always to be understood in that sense in Scripture, but sometimes are to be understood as a request. So they are to be understood in the third petition of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." There the words are to be understood both as an expression of submission, and also a request, as they are explained in the Assembly's Catechism, and so the words are to be understood here. The evangelist Mark says that Christ went away again and spake the same words that he had done in his first prayer. Mark 14:39. But then we must understand it as of the same words with the latter part of his first prayer, "nevertheless not my will but thine be done," as Matthew's more full and particular account shows. So that the thing mentioned in the text, for which Christ was wrestling with God in this prayer, was, that God's will might be done in what related to his sufferings.

But then here another inquiry may arise, *viz.* What is implied in Christ's praying that God's will might be done in what related to his sufferings? To this I answer,

1. This implies a request that he might be strengthened and supported, and enabled to do God's will, by going through with these sufferings. The

same as when he says, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." It was the preceptive will of God that he should take that cup and drink it: it was the Father's command to him. The Father had given him the cup, and as it were set it down before him with the command that he should drink it. This was the greatest act of obedience that Christ was to perform. He prays for strength and help, that his poor feeble human nature might be supported, that he might not fail in this great trial, that he might not sink and be swallowed up, and his strength so overcome that he should not hold out, and finish the appointed obedience. This was the thing that he feared, of which the apostle speaks in the 5th of Hebrews, when he says,"he was heard in that he feared." When he had such an extraordinary sense of the dreadfulness of his sufferings impressed on his mind, the fearfulness of it amazed him. He was afraid lest his poor feeble strength should be overcome, and that he should fail in so great a trial, that he should be swallowed up by that death that he was to die, and so should not be saved from death; and therefore he offered up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to strengthen him, and support, and save him from death, that the death he was to suffer might not overcome his love and obedience, but that he might overcome death, and so be saved from it. If Christ's courage had failed in the trial, and he had not held out under his dying sufferings, he never would have been saved from death, but he would have sunk in the deep mire; he never would have risen from the dead, for his rising from the dead was a reward of his victory. If his courage had failed, and he had given up, he would have remained from under the power of death, and so we should all have perished, we should have remained yet in our sins. If he had failed, all would have failed. If he had not overcome in that sore conflict, neither he nor we could have been freed from death, we all must have perished together. Therefore this was the saving from death that the apostle speaks of, that Christ feared and prayed for with strong crying and tears. His being overcome of death was the thing that he feared, and so he was heard in that he feared. This Christ prayed, that the will of God might be done in his sufferings, even that he might not fail of obeying God's will in his sufferings; and therefore it follows in the next verse in that passage of Hebrews, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." That it was in this respect that Christ in his agony so earnestly prayed that the will of God might be

done, *viz.* that he might have strength to do his will, and might not sink and fail in such great sufferings; is confirmed from the scriptures of the Old Testament, as particularly from the 69th Psalm. The psalmist represents Christ in that psalm, as is evident from the fact that the words of that psalm are represented as Christ's words in many places of the New Testament. That psalm is represented as Christ's prayer to God when his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow and amazement, as it was in his agony; as you may see in the 1st and 2nd verses, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." But then the thing that is represented as being the thing that he feared, was failing, and being overwhelmed, in this great trial: verses 14 and 15. "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water- flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." So again in the 22d Psalm, which is also represented as the prayer of Christ under his dreadful sorrow and sufferings, verses 19, 20, 21. "But be not thou far from me, O Lord; O my Strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth." It was meet and suitable that Christ, when about to engage in that terrible conflict, should thus earnestly seek help from God to enable him to do his will; for he needed God's help--the strength of his human nature, without divine help, was not sufficient to carry him through. This was, without doubt, that in which the first Adam failed in his first trial, that when the trial came he was not sensible of his own weakness and dependence. If he had been, and had leaned on God, and cried to him for his assistance and strength against the temptation, in all likelihood we should have remained innocent and happy creatures to this day.

2. It implies a request that God's will and purpose might be obtained in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, in the glory to his name, that was his design in them; and particularly in the glory of his grace, in the eternal salvation and happiness of his elect. This is confirmed by John 12:27,28. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?-- Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have

both glorified, and will glorify it again." There the first request is the same with the first request of Christ here in like trouble: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." He first prays, as he does here, that he might be saved from his last sufferings. Then, after he was determined within himself that the will of God must be otherwise, that he should not be saved from that hour, "but for this cause," says he, "came I to this hour;" and then his second request after this is, "Father, glorify thy name!" So this is doubtless the purport of the second request in his agony, when he prayed that God's will might be done. It is that God's will might be done in that glory to his own name that he intended in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, that seeing that it was his will that he should suffer, he earnestly prays that the end of his suffering, in the glory of God and the salvation of the elect, may not fail. And these things are what Christ so earnestly wrestled with God for in his prayer, of which we have an account in the text, and we have no reason to think that they were not expressed in prayer as well as implied. It is not reasonable to suppose that the evangelist in his other account of things mentions all the words of Christ's prayer. He only mentions the substance.

III. In what capacity did Christ offer up those earnest prayers to God in his agony?

In answer to this inquiry, I observe that he offered them up not as a private person, but as high priest. The apostle speaks of the strong crying and tears, as what Christ offered up as high priest. Heb. 5:6-7. "As he says also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek: who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," etc. The things that Christ prayed for in those strong cryings, were things not of a private nature, but of common concern to the whole church of which he was the high priest. That the will of God should be done in his obedience unto death, that his strength and courage should not fail, but that he should hold out, was of common concern; for, if he had failed, all would have failed and perished for ever. And of course, that God's name should be glorified in the effects and fruits of his sufferings, and in the salvation and glory of all his elect, was a thing of common concern. Christ offered up

these strong cries with his flesh in the same manner as the priests of old were wont to offer up prayers with their sacrifices. Christ mixed strong crying and tears with his blood, and so offered up his blood and his prayers together, that the effect and success of his blood might be obtained. Such earnest agonizing prayers were offered with his blood, and his infinitely precious and meritorious blood was offered with his prayers.

IV. Why was Christ so earnest in those supplications? Luke speaks of them as very earnest; the apostle speaks of them as strong crying; and his agony partly consisted in this earnestness: and the account that Luke gives us, seems to imply that his bloody sweat was partly at least with the great labour and earnest sense of his soul in wrestling with God in prayer. There were three things that concurred at that time, especially to cause Christ to be thus earnest and engaged.

1. He had then an extraordinary sense how dreadful the consequence would be, if God's will should fail of being done. He had then an extraordinary sense of his own last suffering under the wrath of God, and if he had failed in those sufferings, he knew the consequence must be dreadful. He having now such an extraordinary view of the terribleness of the wrath of God, his love to the elect tended to make him more than ordinarily earnest that they might be delivered from suffering that wrath to all eternity, which could not have been if he had failed of doing God's will, or if the will of God in the effect of his suffering had failed.

2. No wonder that that extraordinary sense that Christ then had of the costliness of the means of sinners' salvation, made him very earnest for the success of those means, as you have already heard.

3. Christ had an extraordinary sense of his dependence on God, and his need of his help to enable him to do God's will in this great trial. Though he was innocent, yet he needed divine help. He was dependent on God, as man, and therefore we read that he trusted in God. Matt. 27:43. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." And when he had such an extraordinary sight of the dreadfulness of that wrath he was to suffer, he saw how much it was beyond the strength of his human nature alone.

V. What was the success of this prayer of Christ?

To this I answer, He obtained all his requests. The apostle says, "He was heard in that he feared;" in all that he feared. He obtained strength and help from God, all that he needed, and was carried through. He was enabled to do and to suffer the whole will of God; and he obtained the whole of the end of his sufferings--a full atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the full salvation of every one of those who were given him in the covenant of redemption, and all that glory to the name of God, which his mediation was designed to accomplish, not one jot or tittle hath failed. Herein Christ in his agony was above all others Jacob's antitype, in his wrestling with God for a blessing; which Jacob did, not as a private person, but as the head of his posterity, the nation of Israel, and by which he obtained that commendation of God, "As a prince thou hast power with God;" and therein was a type of him who was the Prince of princes.

APPLICATION.

Great improvement may be made of the consideration of the strong crying and tears of Christ in the days of his flesh, many ways for our benefit.

1. This may teach us after what manner we should pray to God, not in a cold and careless manner, but with great earnestness and engagedness of spirit, and especially when we are praying to God for those things that are of infinite importance, such as spiritual and eternal blessings. Such were the benefits that Christ prayed for with such strong crying and tears, that he might be enabled to do God's will in that great and difficult work that God had appointed him, that he might not sink and fail, but might get the victory, and so finally be delivered from death, and that God's will and end might be obtained as the fruit of his sufferings, in the glory of God, and the salvation of the elect.

When we go before God in prayer with a cold, dull heart, and in a lifeless and listless manner pray to him for eternal blessings, and those of infinite import to our souls, we should think of Christ's earnest prayers that he poured out to God, with tears and a bloody sweat. The consideration of it may well make us ashamed of our dull, lifeless prayers to God, wherein,

indeed, we rather ask a denial than ask to be heard; for the language of such a manner of praying to God, is, that we do not look upon the benefit that we pray for as of any great importance, that we are indifferent whether God answers us or not. The example of Jacob in wrestling with God for the blessing, should teach us earnestness in our prayers, but more especially the example of Jesus Christ, who wrestled with God in a bloody sweat. If we were sensible as Christ was of the great importance of those benefits that are of eternal consequence, our prayers to God for such benefits would be after another manner than now they are. Our souls also would with earnest labour and strife be engaged in this duty.

There are many benefits that we ask of God in our prayers, which are every whit of as great importance to us as those benefits which Christ asked of God in his agony were to him. It is of as great importance to us that we should be enabled to do the will of God, and perform a sincere, universal, and persevering obedience to his commands, as it was to Christ that he should not fail of doing God's will in his great work. It is of as great importance to us to be saved from death, as it was to Christ that he should get the victory over death, and so be saved from it. It is of as great, and infinitely greater, importance to us, that Christ's redemption should be successful in us, as it was to him that God's will should be done, in the fruits and success of his redemption.

Christ recommended earnest watchfulness and prayerfulness to his disciples, by prayer and example, both at the same time. When Christ was in his agony, and came and found his disciples asleep, he bid them watch and pray, Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." At the same time he set them an example of that which he commanded them, for though they slept he watched, and poured out his soul in those earnest prayers that you have heard of; and Christ has elsewhere taught us to ask those blessings of God that are of infinite importance, as those that will take no denial. We have another example of the great conflicts and engagedness of Christ's spirit in this duty. Luke 6:12. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." And he was often recommending earnestness in crying to God in prayers. In the parable of the unjust judge, Luke 18 at

the beginning; "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for awhile: but afterwards he saith within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith." Luke 6:5, etc. "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." He taught it in his own way of answering prayer, as in answering the woman of Canaan, Matt. 15:22, etc. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." And as Christ prayed in his agony, so I have already mentioned several texts of Scripture wherein we are directed to agonize in our prayers to God.

2. These earnest prayers and strong cries of Christ to the Father in his agony, show the greatness of his love to sinners. For, as has been shown, these strong cries of Jesus Christ were what he offered up to God as a public person, in the capacity of high priest, and in the behalf of those whose priest he was. When he offered up his sacrifice for sinners whom he had loved from eternity, he withal offered up earnest prayers. His

strong cries, his tears, and his blood, were all offered up together to God, and they were all offered up for the same end, for the glory of God in the salvation of the elect. They were all offered up for the same persons, *viz.* for his people. For them he shed his blood and that bloody sweat, when it fell down in clotted lumps to the ground; and for them he so earnestly cried to God at the same time. It was that the will of God might be done in the success of his sufferings, in the success of that blood, in the salvation of those for whom that blood was shed, and therefore this strong crying shows his strong love; it shows how greatly he desired the salvation of sinners. He cried to God that he might not sink and fail in that great undertaking, because if he did so, sinners could not be saved, but all must perish. He prayed that he might get the victory over death, because if he did not get the victory, his people could never obtain that victory, and they can conquer no otherwise than by his conquest. If the Captain of our salvation had not conquered in this sore conflict, none of us could have conquered, but we must have all sunk with him. He cried to God that he might be saved from death, and if he had not been saved from death in his resurrection, none of us could ever have been saved from death. It was a great sight to see Christ in that great conflict that he was in in his agony, but every thing in it was from love, that strong love that was in his heart. His tears that flowed from his eyes were from love; his great sweat was from love; his blood, his prostrating himself on the ground before the Father, was from love; his earnest crying to God was from the strength and ardency of his love. It is looked upon as one principal way wherein true love and good will is shown in Christian friends one towards another, heartily to pray one for another; and it is one way wherein Christ directs us to show our love to our enemies, even praying for them. Matt. 5:44. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." But was there ever any prayer that manifested love to enemies to such a degree, as those strong cries and tears of the Son of God for the success of his blood in the salvation of his enemies; the strife and conflict of whose soul in prayer was such as to produce his agony and his bloody sweat?

3. If Christ was thus earnest in prayer to God, that the end of his sufferings might be obtained in the salvation of sinners, then how much ought those sinners to be reproved that do not earnestly seek their own

salvation! If Christ offered up such strong cries for sinners as their high priest, that bought their salvation, who stood in no need of sinners, who had been happy from all eternity without them, and could not be made happier by them; then how great is the sottishness of those sinners that seek their own salvation in a dull and lifeless manner; that content themselves with a formal attendance on the duties of religion, with their hearts in the mean time much more earnestly set after other things! They after a sort attend on the duty of social prayer, wherein they pray to God that he would have mercy on them and save them; but after what a poor dull way is it that they do it! they do not apply their heart unto wisdom, nor incline their ear to understanding; they do not cry after wisdom, nor lift up their voice for understanding; they do not seek it as silver, nor search for it as for hidden treasures. Christ's earnest cries in his agony may convince us that it was not without reason that he insisted upon it, in Luke 13:24. that we should strive to enter in at the strait gate, which, as I have already observed to you, is, in the original, Agwnizesqe, "*Agonize* to enter in at the strait gate." If sinners would be in a hopeful way to obtain their salvation, they should agonize in that great concern as men that are taking a city by violence, as Matt. 11:12. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." When a body of resolute soldiers are attempting to take a strong city in which they meet with great opposition, what violent conflicts are there before the city is taken! How do the soldiers press on against the very mouths of the enemies' cannon, and upon the points of their swords! When the soldiers are scaling the walls, and making their first entrance into the city, what a violent struggle is there between them and their enemies that strive to keep them out! How do they, as it were, agonize with all their strength! So ought we to seek our salvation, if we would be in a likely way to obtain it. How great is the folly then of those who content themselves with seeking with a cold and lifeless frame of spirit, and so continue from month to month, and from year to year, and yet flatter themselves that they shall be successful!

How much more still are they to be reproved, who are not in a way of seeking their salvation at all, but wholly neglect their precious souls, and attend the duties of religion no further than is just necessary to keep up their credit among men; and instead of pressing into the kingdom of God,

are rather violently pressing on towards their own destruction and ruin, being hurried on by their many head strong lusts, as the herd of swine were hurried on by the legion of devils, and ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters! Matt. 8:32.

4. From what has been said under this proposition, we may learn after what manner Christians ought to go through the work that is before them. Christ had a great work before him when that took place, of which we have an account in the text. Though it was very near the close of his life, yet he then, when his agony began, had the chief part of the work before him that he came into the world to do; which was to offer up that sacrifice which he offered in his last sufferings, and therein to perform the greatest act of his obedience to God. And so the Christians have a great work to do, a service they are to perform to God, that is attended with great difficulty. They have a race set before them that they have to run, a warfare that is appointed them. Christ was the subject of a very great trial in the time of his agony; so God is wont to exercise his people with great trials. Christ met with great opposition in that work that he had to do; so believers are like to meet with great opposition in running the race that is set before them. Christ, as man, had a feeble nature, that was in itself very insufficient to sustain such a conflict, or to support such a load as was coming upon him. So the saints have the same weak human nature, and beside that, great sinful infirmities that Christ had not, which lay them under great disadvantages, and greatly enhance the difficulty of their work. Those great tribulations and difficulties that were before Christ, were the way in which he was to enter into the kingdom of heaven; so his followers must expect, "through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven." The cross was to Christ the way to the crown of glory, and so it is to his disciples. The circumstances of Christ and of his followers in those things are alike, their case, therefore, is the same; and therefore Christ's behaviour under those circumstances, was a fit example for them to follow. They should look to their Captain, and observe after what manner he went through his great work, and the great tribulations which he endured. They should observe after what manner he entered into the kingdom of heaven, and obtained the crown of glory, and so they also should run the race that is set before them. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay

aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Particularly,

(1.) When others are asleep they should be awake, as it was with Christ. The time of Christ's agony was the night season, the time wherein persons were wont to be asleep: it was the time wherein the disciples that were about Christ were asleep; but Christ then had something else to do than to sleep; he had a great work to do; he kept awake, with his heart engaged in this work. So should it be with the believers of Christ; when the souls of their neighbours are asleep in their sins, and under the power of a lethargic insensibility and sloth, they should watch and pray, and maintain a lively sense of the infinite importance of their spiritual concerns. 1 Thess. 5:6. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober."

(2.) They should go through their work with earnest labour, as Christ did. The time when others were asleep was a time when Christ was about his great work, and was engaged in it with all his might, agonizing in it; conflicting and wrestling, in tears, and in blood. So should Christians with the utmost earnestness improve their time with souls engaged in this work, pushing through the opposition they meet with in it, pushing through all difficulties and sufferings there are in the way, running with patience the race set before them, conflicting with the enemies of their souls with all their might; as those that wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

(3.) This labour and strife should be, that God may be glorified, and their own eternal happiness obtained in a way of doing God's will. Thus it was with Christ: what he so earnestly strove for was, that he might do the will of God, that he might keep his command, his difficult command, without failing in it, and that in this way God's will might be done, in that glory to his ever great name, and that salvation to his elect that he intended by his sufferings. Here is an example for the saints to follow in that holy strife, and race, and warfare, which God has appointed them; they should strive

to do the will of their heavenly Father, that they may, as the apostle expresses it, Rom. 12:2. "Prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," and that in this way they may glorify God, and may come at last to be happy for ever in the enjoyment of God.

(4.) In all the great work they have to do, their eye should be to God for his help to enable them to overcome. Thus did the man Christ Jesus: he strove in his work even to such an agony and bloody sweat. But how did he strive? It was not in his own strength, but his eyes were to God, he cries unto him for his help and strength to uphold him, that he might not fail; he watched and prayed, as he desired his disciples to do; he wrestled with his enemies and with his great sufferings, but at the same time wrestled with God to obtain his help, to enable him to get the victory. Thus the saints should use their strength in their Christian course to the utmost, but not as depending on their own strength, but crying mightily to God for his strength to make them conquerors.

(5.) In this way they should hold out to the end as Christ did. Christ in this way was successful, and obtained the victory, and won the prize; he overcame, and is set down with the Father in his throne. So Christians should persevere and hold out in their great work to the end; they should continue to run their race till they have come to the end of it; they should be faithful unto the death as Christ was; and then, when they have overcome, they shall sit down with him in his throne. Rev. 3:21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

5. Hence burdened and distressed sinners, if any such are here present, may have abundant ground of encouragement to come to Christ for salvation. Here is great encouragement to sinners to come to this high priest that offered up such strong crying and tears with his blood, for the success of his sufferings in the salvation of sinners. For,

1st, Here is great ground of assurance that Christ stands ready to accept of sinners, and bestow salvation upon them; for those strong cries of his that he offered up in the capacity of our high priest, show how earnestly desirous he was of it. If he was not willing that sinners should be saved, be they ever so unworthy of it, then why would he so wrestle with God for

it in such a bloody sweat? Would any one so earnestly cry to God with such costly cries, in such great labour and travail of soul, for that, that he did not desire that God should bestow? No, surely! but this shows how greatly his heart was set on the success of his redemption; and therefore since he has by such earnest prayers, and by such a bloody sweat, obtained salvation of the Father to bestow on sinners, he will surely be ready to bestow it upon them, if they come to him for it; otherwise he will frustrate his own design; and he that so earnestly cried to God that his design might not be frustrated, will not, after all, frustrate it himself.

2. Here is the strongest ground of assurance that God stands ready to accept of all those that come to him for mercy through Christ, for this is what Christ prayed for in those earnest prayers, whose prayers were always heard, as Christ says, John 11:42. "And I knew that thou hearest me always." And especially may they conclude, that heard their high priest in those strong cries that he offered up with his blood, and that especially on the following account.

(1.) They were the most earnest prayers that ever were made. Jacob was very earnest when he wrestled with God; and many others have wrestled with God with many tears; yea, doubtless, many of the saints have wrestled with God with such inward labour and strife as to produce powerful effects on the body. But so earnest was Christ, so strong was the labour and fervency of his heart, that he cried to God in a sweat of blood; so that if any earnestness and importunity in prayer ever prevailed with God, we may conclude that that prevailed.

(2.) He who then prayed was the most worthy person that ever put up a prayer. He had more worthiness than ever men or angels had in the sight of God, according as by inheritance he has obtained a more excellent name than they; for he was the only-begotten Son of God, infinitely lovely in his sight, the Son in whom he declared once and again he was well-pleased. He was infinitely near and dear to God, and had more worthiness in his eyes ten thousand times than all men and angels put together. And can we suppose any other than that such a person was heard when he cried to God with such earnestness? Did Jacob, a poor sinful man, when he had wrestled with God, obtain of God the name of ISRAEL, and that encomium, that as a prince he had power with God,

and prevailed? And did Elijah, who was a man of like passions, and of like corruptions with us, when he prayed, earnestly prevail on God to work such great wonders? And shall not the only-begotten Son of God, when wrestling with God in tears and blood, prevail, and have his request granted him?

Surely there is no room to suppose any such thing; and therefore, there is no room to doubt whether God will bestow salvation on those that believe in him, at his request.

(3.) Christ offered up these earnest prayers with the best plea for an answer that ever was offered to God, *viz.* his own blood; which was an equivalent for the thing that he asked. He not only offered up strong cries, but he offered them up with a price fully sufficient to purchase the benefit he asked.

(4.) Christ offered this price and those strong cries both together; for at the same time that he was pouring out these earnest requests for the success of his redemption in the salvation of sinners, he also shed his blood. His blood fell down to the ground at the same instant that his cries went up to heaven. Let burdened and distressed sinners, that are ready to doubt of the efficacy of Christ's intercession for such unworthy creatures as they, and to call in question God's readiness to accept them for Christ's sake, consider these things. Go to the garden where the Son of God was in an agony, and where he cried to God so earnestly, and where his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, and then see what a conclusion you will draw up from such a wonderful sight.

6. The godly may take great comfort in this, that Christ has as their high priest offered up such strong cries to God. You that have good evidence of your being believers in Christ, and his true followers and servants, may comfort yourselves in this, that Christ Jesus is your high priest, that that blood, which Christ shed in his agony, fell down to the ground for you, and that those earnest cries were sent up to God for you, for the success of his labours and sufferings in all that good you stood in need of in this world, and in your everlasting happiness in the world to come. This may be a comfort to you in all losses, and under all difficulties, that you may encourage your faith, and strengthen your hope, and cause you greatly to

rejoice. If you were under any remarkable difficulties, it would be a great comfort to you to have the prayers of some man that you looked upon to be a man of eminent piety, and one that had a great interest at the throne of grace, and especially if you knew that he was very earnest and greatly engaged in prayer for you. But how much more may you be comforted in it, that you have an interest in the prayers and cries of the only-begotten and infinitely worthy Son of God, and that he was so earnest in his prayers for you, as you have heard!

7. Hence we may learn how earnest Christians ought to be in their prayers and endeavours for the salvation of others. Christians are the followers of Christ, and they should follow him in this. We see from what we have heard, how great the labour and travail of Christ's soul was for others' salvation, and what earnest and strong cries to God accompanied his labours. Here he hath set us an example. Herein he hath set an example for ministers, who should as co-workers with Christ travail in birth with them till Christ be found in them. Gal. 4:19. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." They should be willing to spend and be spent for them. They should not only labour for them, and pray earnestly for them, but should, if occasion required, be ready to suffer for them, and to spend not only their strength, but their blood for them. 2 Cor. 12:15. "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Here is an example for parents, showing how they ought to labour and cry to God for the spiritual good of their children. You see how Christ laboured and strove and cried to God for the salvation of his spiritual children; and will not you earnestly seek and cry to God for your natural children?

Here is an example for neighbours one towards another how they should seek and cry for the good of one another's souls, for this is the command of Christ, that they should love one another as Christ loved them. John 15:12. Here is an example for us, showing how we should earnestly seek and pray for the spiritual and eternal good of our enemies, for Christ did all this for his enemies, and when some of those enemies were at that very instant plotting his death, and busily contriving to satiate their malice and cruelty, in his most extreme torments, and most ignominious destruction.

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Temptation and Deliverance

"And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out." -- **Genesis 39:12**

Subject: 'Tis our duty not only to avoid those things that are themselves sinful, but also, as far as may be, those things that lead and expose to sin.

We have here, and in the context, an account of that remarkable behavior of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, which was the occasion both of his great affliction, and also of his high advancement and prosperity in the land of Egypt.

We read in the beginning of the chapter, how Joseph, after he had been so cruelly treated by his brethren, and sold into Egypt for a slave, was advanced in the house of Potiphar, who had bought him. Joseph was one that feared God, and therefore God was with him; and so influenced the heart of Potiphar his master, that instead of keeping him as a mere slave, to which purpose he was sold, he made him his steward and overseer over his house, and all that he had was put into his hands; in so much, that we are told, verse 6, "That he left all that he had in his hand; and he knew not ought that he had, save the bread which he did eat." — While Joseph was in these prosperous circumstances, he met with a great temptation in his master's house. We are told that, he being a goodly person and well favored, his mistress cast her eyes upon and lusted after him, and used all her art to tempt him to commit uncleanness with her.

Concerning this temptation, and his behavior under it, many things are worthy to be noted. Particularly,

We may observe how *great* the temptation was, that he was under. It is to be considered, that Joseph was now in his *youth*; a season of life, when persons are most liable to be overcome by temptations of this nature. And he was in a state of unexpected *prosperity* in Potiphar's house; which has a tendency to lift persons up, especially young ones, whereby commonly they more easily fall before temptations.

And then, the *superiority* of the person that laid the temptation before him, rendered it much the greater. She was his mistress, and he a servant under her. And the *manner* of her tempting him. She did not only carry herself so towards Joseph, as to give him cause to *suspect* that he might be admitted to such criminal converse with her; but she directly *proposed* it to him; plainly manifesting her disposition to it. So that here was no such thing as suspicion of her unwillingness to deter him, but a manifestation of her desire to entice him to it. Yea, she appeared greatly engaged in the matter. And there was not only her desire manifested to entice him, but her authority over him to enforce the temptation. She was his mistress, and he might well imagine, that if he utterly refused a compliance, he should incur her displeasure. And she, being his master's wife, had power to do much to his disadvantage, and to render his circumstances more uncomfortable in the family.

And the temptation was the greater, in that she did not only tempt him once, but frequently, *day by day,* verse 10. And at last became more violent with him. She caught him by his garment, saying, *Lie with me.*

His *behavior* was very remarkable under these temptations. He absolutely refused any compliance with them. He made no reply that manifested as though the temptation had gained at all upon him; so much as to hesitate about it, or at all deliberate upon it. He complied in no *degree*, either to the gross act she proposed, or anything *tending* towards it, or that should at all be gratifying to her wicked inclination. And he persisted resolute and unshaken under her continual solicitations, verse 10, "And it came to pass as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." He, to his utmost, avoided so much as being where she was. And the motives and principles, from which he acted, manifested by his reply to her solicitations, are remarkable. — He first sets before her, how injuriously he should act against his master, if he should comply with her proposal. "Behold, my master — hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife." But he then proceeded to inform her of that, which, above all things, deterred him from a compliance, *viz.* that it would be great wickedness, and sin against God.

— ”How shall I do this, and sin against God?” He would not do any such thing, as he would not injure his master; but that which influenced more than all on this occasion, was the fear of sinning against God. On this account he persisted in his resolution to the last.

In the text we have an account of his behavior under the last and greatest temptation that he had from her. This temptation was great, as it was at a time when there was nobody in the house but he and his mistress, verse 11. There was an opportunity to commit the fact with the greatest secrecy. And at this time it seems that she was more violent than ever before. She caught him by the garment, etc. She laid hold on him, as though she were resolute to attain her purpose of him.

Under these circumstances he not only refused her, but fled from her, as he would have done from one that was going to assassinate him. He escaped, as for his life. He not only would not be guilty of such a fact, but neither would he by any means be in the house with her, where he should be in the way of her temptation. — This behavior of Joseph is doubtless recorded for the instruction of all. Therefore from the words I shall observe, that it is our duty, not only to avoid those things that are themselves sinful, but also, as far as may be, those things that lead and expose to sin.

SECTION I

Why we should avoid what tends to sin.

Thus did Joseph: he not only refused actually to commit uncleanness with his mistress, who enticed him; but refused to be there, where he should be in the way of temptation, verse 10. He refused to lie by her, or be with her. And in the text we are told, “he fled and got him out;” would by no means be in her company. Though it was no sin in itself, for Joseph to be in the house where his mistress was; but under these circumstances it would expose him to sin. Joseph was sensible [that] he had naturally a

corrupt heart, that tended to betray him to sin. And therefore he would by no means be in the way of temptation, but with haste he fled, he ran from the dangerous place. Inasmuch as he was exposed to sin in that house, he fled out of it with as much haste as if it had been on fire; or full of enemies, who stood ready with drawn swords to stab him to the very heart. When she took him by the garment, he left his garment in her hands. He had rather lose his garment, than stay a moment there, where he was in such danger of losing his chastity.

I said, that persons should avoid things that expose to sin, *as far as may be;* because it is possible that persons may be *called* to expose themselves to temptation; and when it is so, they may hope for divine strength and protection under temptation.

It may be a man's indispensable duty to undertake an office, or a work, attended with a great deal of temptation. Thus *ordinarily* a man ought not to run into the temptation of being persecuted for the true religion; lest the temptation should be too hard for him; but should avoid it, as much as may be. Therefore Christ thus directs his disciples, Mat. 10:23, "When ye be persecuted in one city, flee to another." Yet, the case may be so, that a man may be called not to flee from persecution; but to run the venture of such a trial, trusting in God to uphold him under it. Ministers and magistrates may be obliged to continue with their people in such circumstances; as Nehemiah says, Neh. 6:11, "Should such a man as I flee?" So the apostles. — Yea, they may be called to go into the midst of it; to those places where they cannot reasonably expect but to meet with such temptations. So Paul went up to Jerusalem, where he knew beforehand, that *there bonds and affliction awaited him,* Acts 20:23.

So in some other cases, the necessity of affairs may call upon men to engage in some business that is peculiarly attended with temptations. But when it is so, the are indeed least exposed to sin; for they are always safest in the way of duty. Pro. 10:9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." And though there be many things by which they may have extraordinary temptations, in the affairs they have undertaken, yet if they have a clear call, it is no presumption to hope for divine support and preservation in it.

But for persons needlessly to expose themselves to temptation, and to do those things that tend to sin, is unwarrantable, and contrary to that excellent example set before us. And that we ought to avoid not only those things that are in themselves sinful, but also those things that lead and *expose* to sin, is manifest by the following arguments:

First, it is very evident that we ought to use our utmost endeavors to avoid sin; which is inconsistent with needlessly doing those things, that expose and lead to sin. And the greater any evil is, the greater care, and the more earnest endeavors, does it require to avoid it. Those evils that appear to us very great and dreadful, we use proportionably great care to avoid. And therefore the greatest evil of all, requires the greatest and utmost care to avoid it.

Sin is an infinite evil, because committed against an infinitely great and excellent Being, and so a violation of infinite obligation. Therefore however great our care be to avoid sin, it cannot be more than proportionable to the evil we would avoid. Our care and endeavor cannot be infinite, as the evil of sin is infinite. We ought to use every method that tends to the avoiding of sin. This is manifest to reason. — And not only so, but this is positively required of us in the Word of God. Jos. 22:5, "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your soul." Deu. 4:15, 16, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves." Chap. 12:30, "Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared," etc. Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." 1 Cor. 10:12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Deu. 4:9. "Take heed to thyself, keep thy soul diligently." These and many other texts of Scripture, plainly require of us the utmost possible diligence and caution to avoid sin.

But how can he be said to use the utmost possible diligence and caution to avoid sin, that voluntarily does those things which naturally expose and lead to sin? How can he be said with the utmost possible caution to avoid an enemy, that voluntarily lays himself in his way? How can he be said to use the utmost possible caution to preserve the life of his child,

that suffers it to go on the edge of precipices or pits; or to play on the borders of a deep gulf; or to wander in a wood, that is haunted by beasts of prey?

Second, it is evident that we ought to avoid those things that expose and lead to sin; because a due sense of the evil of sin, and a just hatred of it, will necessarily have this effect upon us, to cause us so to do. — If we were duly sensible of the evil and dreadful nature of sin, we should have an exceeding dread of it upon our spirits. We should hate it worse than death, and should fear it worse than the devil himself; and dread it even as we dread damnation. But those things that men exceedingly dread, they naturally shun; and they avoid those things that they apprehend expose to them. As a child, that has been greatly terrified by the sight of any wild beast, will by no means be persuaded to go where it apprehends that it shall fall in its way.

As sin in its own nature is infinitely hateful, so in its natural tendency it is infinitely dreadful. It is the tendency of all sin, eternally to undo the soul. Every sin naturally carries hell in it! Therefore, all sin ought to be treated by us as we would treat a thing that is infinitely terrible. If any one sin, yea, the least sin, [does] not necessarily bring eternal ruin with it, this is owing to nothing but the free grace and mercy of God to us, and not to the nature and tendency of sin itself. But certainly, we ought not to take the less care to avoid sin, or all that tends to it, for the freeness and greatness of God's mercy to us, through which there is hope of pardon; for that would be indeed a most ungrateful and vile abuse of mercy. Were it made known to us, that if we ever voluntarily committed any particular act of sin, we should be damned without any remedy or escape, should we not exceedingly dread the commission of such? Should we not be very watchful and careful to stand at the greatest distance from that sin; and from everything that might expose us to it; and that has any tendency to stir up our lusts, or to betray us to such an act of sin? Let us then consider, that though the next voluntary act of known sin shall not necessarily and unavoidably *issue* in certain damnation, yet it will certainly *deserve* it. We shall thereby really deserve to be cast off, without any remedy or hope. And it can only be owing to free grace, that it will not certainly and remedilessly be followed with such a punishment. And shall

we be guilty of such a vile abuse of God's mercy to us, as to take encouragement from it, the more boldly to expose ourselves to sin?

Third, it is evident that we ought not only to avoid sin, but things that expose and lead to sin; because this is the way we act in things that pertain to our temporal interest. — Men avoid not only those things that are themselves the hurt or ruin of their temporal interest, but also the things that tend or expose to it. Because they love their temporal lives, they will not only actually avoid killing themselves, but they are very careful to avoid those things that bring their lives into danger; though they do not certainly know but they may escape.

They are careful not to pass rivers and deep waters on rotten ice, though they do not certainly know that they shall fall through and be drowned. They will not only avoid those things that would be in themselves the ruin of their estates — as setting their own houses on fire, and burning them up with their substance; taking their money and throwing it into the sea, etc. — but they carefully avoid those things by which their estates are exposed. They have their eyes about them; are careful with whom they deal; are watchful, that they be not overreached in their bargains, and that they do not lay themselves open to knaves and fraudulent persons.

If a man be sick of a dangerous distemper, he is careful to avoid everything that tends to increase the disorder; not only what he knows to be mortal, but other things that he fears may be prejudicial to him. Men are in this way wont to take care of their temporal interest. And therefore, if we are not as careful to avoid sin, as we are to avoid injury in our temporal interest, it will show a regardless disposition with respect to sin and duty; or that we do not much care though we do sin against God. God's glory is surely of as much importance and concern as our temporal interest. Certainly we should be as careful not to be exposed to sin against the Majesty of heaven and earth, as men are wont to be of a few pounds; yea, the latter are but mere trifles, compared with the former.

Fourth, we are wont to do thus by our dear earthly friends. — We not only are careful of those things wherein the destruction of their lives, or their hurt and calamity in any respect, directly consist; but are careful to avoid those things that but remotely tend to it. We are careful to prevent all

occasions of their loss; and are watchful against that which tends, in any wise, to deprive them of their comfort or good name. And the reason is, because they are very dear to us. In this manner, men are wont to be careful of the good of their own children, and dread the approaches of any mischief that they apprehend they are, or may be, exposed to. And we should take it hard if our friends did not do thus by us.

And surely we ought to treat God as a dear friend. We ought to act towards him, as those that have a sincere love and unfeigned regard to him; and so ought to watch and be careful against all *occasions* of that which is contrary to his honor and glory. If we have not a temper and desire so to do, it will show that, whatever our pretenses are, we are not God's sincere friends, and have no true love to him. — If we should be offended at any that have professed friendship to us, if they have treated us in this manner, and were no more careful of our interest; surely God may justly be offended, that we are no more careful of his glory.

Fifth, we would have God, in his providence towards us, not to order those things that tend to our hurt, or expose our interest; therefore certainly we ought to avoid those things that lead to sin against him.

We desire and love to have God's providence such towards us, as that our welfare may be well secured. No man loves to live exposed, uncertain and in dangerous circumstances. While he is so, he lives uncomfortably, in that he lives in continual fear. We desire that God would so order things concerning us, that we may be safe from fear of evil; and that no evil may come nigh our dwelling; and that because we dread calamity. So we do not love the appearance and approaches of it; and love to have it at a great distance from us. We desire to have God to be to us as a wall of fire round about us, to defend us; and that he would surround us as the mountains do the valleys, to guard us from every danger, or enemy; that so no evil may come nigh us.

Now this plainly shows, that we ought, in our behavior towards God, to keep at a great distance from sin, and from all those exposes to it; as we desire God, in his providence to us, should keep calamity and misery at a great distance from us, and not to order those things that expose our welfare.

Sixth, seeing we are to pray we may not be led into temptation, certainly we ought not to run ourselves into it. — This is one request that Christ directs us to make to God in that form of prayer, which he taught his disciples — "Lead us not into temptation." And how inconsistent shall we be with ourselves, if we pray to God, that we should not be led into temptations; and at the same time, we are not careful to avoid temptation; but bring ourselves into it, by doing those things that lead and expose to sin. What self-contradiction is it, for a man to pray to God that he may be kept from that, which he takes no care to avoid! By praying that we may be kept from temptation, we profess to God that being in temptation is a thing to be avoided; but by running into it we show that we choose the contrary, *viz.* not to avoid it.

Seventh, the apostle directs us to avoid those things that are in themselves lawful, but tend to lead others into sin. Surely then we should avoid what tends to lead ourselves into sin. — The apostle directs, 1 Cor. 8:9, "Take heed lest — this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." Rom. 14:13, "That no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." Verse 15, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat." Verse 20, 21, "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." — Now if this rule of the apostle be agreeable to the word of Christ, as we must suppose, or expunge what he says out of the canon of the Scripture; then a like rule obliges more strongly in those things that tend to lead *ourselves* into sin.

Eighth, there are many precepts of Scripture, which directly and positively imply, that we ought to avoid those things that tend to sin.

This very thing is commanded by Christ, Mat. 26:41, where he directs us to "watch lest we enter into temptation." But certainly running ourselves into temptation, is the reverse of watching against it. — We are commanded to abstain from all *appearance* of evil; *i.e.* do by sin as a man does by a thing, the sight or appearance of which he hates; and therefore will avoid anything that looks like it; and will not come near or in sight of it.

Again, Christ commanded to separate from us those things that are stumbling-blocks, or occasions of sin, however dear they are to us. Mat. 5:29, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.” Verse 30, “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut if off.” By the right hand offending us, is not meant its paining us; but the word in the original signifies, being a stumbling-block; if thy right hand prove a stumbling-block, or occasion to fall; *i.e.* an occasion to sin. Those things are called offenses or stumbling-blocks in the New Testament, which are the occasions of falling into sin. — Yea, Christ tells us, that we must avoid them, however dear they are to us, though as dear as our right hand or right eye. If there be any practice that naturally tends and exposes us to sin, we must have done with it; though we love it never so well, and are never so loth to part with it; though it be as contrary to our inclination, as to cut off our own right hand, or pluck out our own right eye; and that upon pain of damnation, for it is intimated that if we do not, we must go with two hands and two eyes into hell fire.

Again, God took great care to forbid the children of Israel those things that tended to lead them into sin. For this reason, he forbad them marrying strange wives. Deu. 7:3, 4, “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them, — for they will turn away thy sons from following me, that they may serve other gods.” For this reason they were commanded to destroy all those things, that the nations of Canaan had used in their idolatry; and if any were enticed over to idolatry, they were to be destroyed without mercy; though ever so near and dear friends. They were not only to be parted with, but stoned with stones; yea, they themselves were to fall upon them, and put them to death, though son or daughter, or their bosom friend. Deu. 13:6, etc. “If thy brother, — or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friends, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, — thou shalt not consent unto him, — neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death.”

Again, The wise man warns us to avoid those things that tend and expose us to sin; especially the sin of uncleanness. Pro. 6:27, “Can a man take fire

in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? — So, whosoever touches her, shall not be innocent." This is the truth held forth; avoid those customs and practices that naturally tend to stir up lust. And there are many examples in Scripture, which have the force of precept; and recorded, as not only worthy, but demand our imitation. The conduct of Joseph is one; and that recorded of king David, is another. Psa. 39:1, 2, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good" — even from good — that is, he was so watchful over his words, and kept at such a great distance from speaking what might in any way tend to sin; that he avoided, in certain circumstances, speaking what was in itself lawful; lest he should be betrayed into that which was sinful.

Ninth, a prudent sense of our own weakness, and exposedness to yield to temptation, obliges us to avoid that which leads or exposes to sin.

Whoever knows himself, and is sensible how weak he is, and his constant exposedness to run into sin — how full of corruption his heart is, which, like fuel, is ready to catch fire, and bring destruction upon him — how much he has in him to incline him to sin, and how unable he is to stand of himself — who is sensible of this, and has any regard of his duty, will he not be very watchful against everything that may lead and expose to sin? On this account Christ directed us, Mat. 26:41, "To watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation." The reason is added, the flesh is weak! He who, in confidence of his own strength, boldly runs the venture of sinning, by going into temptation, manifests great presumption, and a sottish insensibility of his own weakness. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Pro. 28:26.

The wisest and strongest, and some of the most holy men in the world, have been overthrown by such means. So was David; so was Solomon, — his wives turned away his heart. If such persons so eminent for holiness were this way led into sin, surely it should be a warning to us. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

SECTION II

What things lead and expose to sin.

If anything be made out clearly, from reason and the Word of God, to be our duty, this would be enough with all Christians. Will a follower of Christ stand objecting and disputing against what is irrefragably proved and demonstrated to be his duty?

But some may be ready to inquire, How shall we know what things do lead and expose to sin? Let a man do what he will, he cannot avoid sinning, as long as he has such a corrupt heart within him. And there is nothing a man can do, but he may find some temptation in it. And though it be true, that a man ought to avoid those things which have a special tendency to expose men to sin, are what we ought to shun, as much as in us lies — yet how shall we judge and determine what things have a natural tendency to sin, or do especially lead to it?

I would answer in some particulars which are plain and easy; and which cannot be denied without the greatest absurdity.

First, that which borders on those sins, to which the lusts of men's hearts strongly incline them, is of this sort. Men come into the world with many strong and violent lusts in their hearts, and are exceeding prone of themselves to transgress; even in the safest circumstances in which they can be placed. And surely so much the nearer they are to that sin, to which they are naturally inclined; so much the more are they exposed. If any of us who are parents should see our children near the brink of some deep pit, or close by the edge of the precipice of a high mountain; and not only so, but the ground upon which the child stood slippery, and steeply descending directly toward the precipice; should we not reckon a child exposed in such a case? Should we not be in haste to remove the child from its very dangerous situation?

It was the manner among the Israelites, to build their houses with flat roofs, so that persons might walk on the tops of their houses. And

therefore God took care to make it a law among them, that every man should have battlements upon the edges of their roofs; lest any person should fall off and be killed. Deu. 22:8, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." And certainly we ought to take the like care that we do not fall into sin; which carries in it eternal death. We should, as it were, fix a battlement, a guard, to keep us from the edge of the precipice. Much more ought we to take care, that we do not go upon a roof that is not only without battlements, but when it is steep, and we shall naturally incline to fall. — Men's lusts are like strong enemies, endeavoring to draw them into sin. If a man stood upon a dangerous precipice, and had enemies about him, pulling and drawing him, endeavoring to throw him down; would he, in such a case, choose or dare to stand near the edge? Would he look upon himself safe, close on the brink? Would he not endeavor, for his own safety, to keep at a distance?

Second, those things that tend to feed lusts in the imagination, are of this kind. — They lead and expose men to sin. Those things that have a natural tendency to excite in the mind the imagination of that which is the object of the lust, certainly tend to feed and promote that lust. What can be more evident, than that a presenting of the object tends to stir up the appetite? Reason and experience teach this. — Therefore, all things, whether words or actions, which have a tendency and expose to sin, tend also to raise in the mind imaginations of what the lust tends to. It is certainly wrong to feed a lust, even in the imagination. It is quite contrary to the holy rules of God's words. Pro. 24:9, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Mat. 5:28, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery." A man, by gratifying his lusts in his imagination and thoughts, may make his soul in the sight of God to be a hold of foul spirits, and like a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. And sinful imaginations tend to sinful actions, and outward behavior in the end. Lust is always first conceived in the imagination, and then brought forth in the outward practice. You may see the progress of it in Jam. 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." — Such things are abominable in the sight of a pure and holy God. We are commanded to keep at a great distance from spiritual pollution; and to hate even the very

"garment spotted with the flesh." Jude 23.

Third, those things that the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended or followed with sin, are of this sort. Experience is a good rule to determine by in things of this nature. How do we know the natural tendency of anything, but by observation and experience? Men observe and find, that some things are commonly attended and followed with other things; and hence mankind pronounce, that they have a natural tendency to them. We have no other way to know the tendency of anything. Thus men by observation and experience know that the warmth of the sun, and showers of rain, are attended with the growth of plants; and hence they learn, that they have a tendency to it. So they find by experience, that the bite of some kinds of serpents is commonly followed with illness, and often with death; and hence they learn, that the bite of such serpents has a natural tendency to bring disorder upon the body, and exposes to death. — And so, if experience and common observation shows, that any particular practice or custom is commonly attended with that which is very sinful, we may safely conclude that such a practice *tends* to sin; that it leads and exposes to it.

Thus we may determine that tavern-haunting and gaming are things that tend to sin; because common experience and observation show, that those practices are attended with a great deal of sin, and wickedness. The observation of all ages and all nations, with one voice, declares it. It shows, where taverns are much frequented for drinking and the like, they are especially places of sin, of profaneness, and other wickedness; and it shows, that those towns, where is much of this, are places where no good generally prevails. And it also shows, that those persons that are given much to frequenting taverns are most commonly vicious persons. And so of gaming; as playing at cards, experience shows, that those persons that practice this, do generally fall into much sin. Hence these practices are become infamous among all sober virtuous persons.

Fourth, another way by which persons may determine of some things, that they lead and expose to sin, is by their own experience, or what they have found in themselves. — This surely is enough to convince them, that such things actually lead and expose to sin. For what will convince men, if their own experience will not? Thus if men have found by undeniable

experience, that any practice or custom stirs up lust in them, and has betrayed them into foolish and sinful behavior, or sinful thoughts; they may determine that they lead to sin. If they, upon examining themselves, must own that a custom or practice has disposed them to the omission of known duty, such as secret or family prayer, and has indisposed them to reading and religious meditation — or if they find, since they have complied with such a custom, they are less watchful of their hearts, less disposed to anything that is serious; that the frame of their mind is more light, and their hearts less disposed on the things of another world, and more after vanity — these are *sinful effects*. And therefore if experience shows a custom or practice to be attended with these things, then experience shows that they lead and expose to sin.

Fifth, we may determine whether a thing be of an evil tendency or not, by the effect that an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a general flourishing of religion, has with respect to it. If this puts a stop to any practice or custom, and roots it out; surely it argues, that that practice or custom is of no good tendency. For if there be no hurt in it, and it tends to no hurt, why should the Spirit of God destroy it? The Spirit of God has no tendency to destroy anything that is neither sinful, nor has any tendency to sin. Why should it? Why should we suppose, that he is an enemy to that which has no hurt in it; nor has any tendency to that which is hurtful?

The flourishing of religion has no tendency to abolish or expel anything that is no way against religion. That which is not against religion, religion will not appear against. It is a rule that holds in all contraries and opposites. The opposition is equal on both sides. So contrary as light is to darkness, so contrary is darkness to light. So contrary as the flourishing of religion is to any custom, just so contrary is that custom to the flourishing of religion. That custom that religion tends to destroy, that custom, if it prevail, tends also to destroy religion. Therefore, if the flourishing of religion, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God, tends to overthrow any custom, that takes place or prevails, we may surely determine, that that custom is either in itself sinful, or tends and exposes to evil.

Sixth, we may determine, by the effect that a general decay of religion has

with respect to them, whether they be things of a sinful tendency or not. If they be things that come with a decay of religion, that creep in as that decays, we may determine they are things of no good tendency. The withdrawing of good does not let in good but evil. Evil, not good, comes in, as good gradually ceases.

Therefore, if there be any decay of religion in the town, or in particular persons, and upon this, any certain customs or practices take place and are allowed, which were wholly abstained from and renounced, when religion was in a more flourishing state; we may safely conclude that such customs and practices are contrary to the nature of true religion; and therefore in themselves sinful, or tending to sin.

Seventh, we may in good things determine whether any custom be of a good tendency, by considering what the effect would be, if it was openly and universally owned and practiced. There are many things which persons practice somewhat secretly, and which they plead to be not hurtful; but which if they had suitable consideration to discern the consequence of everybody openly practicing the same, would soon show a most woeful state of things. If therefore there be any custom, that will not bear universal open practice and profession; we may determine that *that* custom is of an ill tendency. For if it is neither sinful in itself, nor tends to anything sinful, then it is no matter how open it is: for we need not be afraid of that custom being too prevalent and universal, that has no ill tendency in it.

SECTION III

A serious warning to all, and especially young people.

Thus I have mentioned some general rules, by which to determine and judge, what things are of a bad and sinful tendency. And these things are so plain, that for a person to deny them, would be absurd and ridiculous. — I would now, in the name of God, *warn all persons* to avoid such

things, as appear by these rules to lead and expose to sin. And particularly, I would take occasion to warn *young people,* as they would approve themselves fearers of God, to avoid all such things in company, that being tired by these rules, will appear to have a tendency to sin. Avoid all such ways of talking and acting as have a tendency to this; and follow the example of Joseph. Not only gross acts of uncleanness, but all acts of lasciviousness, both in talking and acting, are strictly forbidden in Scripture; as what should not be so much as once named among saints or Christians. Gal. 5:9, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." Eph. 5:3, 4, 5, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." We should hate even the garment spotted with the flesh, *i.e.* should hate and shun all that, in the least degree, approaches to any such thing.

And I desire that certain customs, too common among young people, may be examined by those rules that have been mentioned. That custom in particular, of young people of different sexes reclining together — however little is made of it, and however ready people may be to laugh at its being condemned — if it be examined by the rules that have been mentioned, it will appear, past all contradiction, to be one of those that lead and expose to sin. And I believe experience and fact abundantly bear witness to it. It has been one main thing that has led to the growth of uncleanness in the land. And there are other customs and liberties, customarily used among young people in company, which they who use them know that they lead to sin. They know that they stir up their lusts; and this is the very end for which they do it, to gratify their lusts in some measure. Little do such persons consider, what a holy God they are soon to be judged by, who abominates the impurities of their hearts. — If therefore they do actually stir up and feed lust, then certainly tend to further degrees and more gross acts. That which stirs up lust, makes it more violent, and does therefore certainly the more expose persons to be overcome by it. How evident and undeniable are these things; and how strange that any should make a derision of them!

Possibly you may be confident of your own strength; and may think with yourself, that you are not in danger, that there is no temptation in these things, but what you are able easily to overcome. But you should consider that the most self-confidant are most in danger. Peter was very confidant that he should not deny Christ, but how dreadfully otherwise was the event! If others that have fallen into gross sins, should declare how it was with them; doubtless they would say, that they at first thought there was no danger. They were far from the thought that ever they should commit such wickedness; but yet by venturing further and further, they fell at last into the foulest and grossest transgressions. Persons may long withstand temptation, and be suddenly be overcome at last. None so much in danger, as the most bold. They are most safe, who are most sensible of their own weakness; most distrustful of their own hearts; and most sensible of their continual need of restraining grace. Young persons, with respect to the sin of uncleanness, are dealt with by the devil, just as some give an account of serpents charming the birds and other animals down into their mouths. If the serpent takes them with his eyes, though they seem to be affrighted by it, yet they will not flee away, but will keep the serpent in sight, and approach nearer and nearer to him, till they fall a prey.

Another custom that I desire may be examined by the aforementioned rules, is that of young people of both sexes getting together in companies for mirth, and spending the time together till late in the night, in their jollity. I desire our young people to suffer their ears to be open to what I have to say upon this point; as I am the messenger of the Lord of hosts to them; and not determine that they will not hearken, before they have heard what I shall say. I hope there are but few persons among us so abandoned, as to determine that they will go on in a practice, whether they are convinced that it is unlawful or not; or though it should be proved to them to be unlawful by undeniable arguments. — Let us then examine this custom and practice by what has been said. It has been proved undeniably, that we ought not to go on in a practice that leads and exposes to sin; and rules have been laid down to judge what does thus expose and lead to it, which I think are plain and undeniable. Certainly a Christian will not be unwilling to have his practices examined and tried by the rules of reason and God's word; but will rather rejoice in it. And I

desire particularly that the practice may be tried by that sure touchstone of experience. This is one of the rules of trial that have been mentioned; that any custom which the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended with sin, may be concluded to be unlawful. And if we look abroad in the country, I doubt not but these two things will be found.

First, that as to those *places*, where there is most of this carried on among young people (as there is more of it in some places than others), it will be found, as a thing that universally holds, that the young people there are commonly a loose, vain, and irreligious generation; little regarding God, heaven or hell, or anything but vanity. And that commonly in those towns where most frolicking is carried on, there are the most frequent breakings out of gross sins; fornication in particular.

Second, if we go though the country, we shall for the most part find, that those *persons* who are most addicted to this practice, are the furthest from serious thought, and are the vainest and loosest upon other accounts. And whence should this be, if such a practice was not sinful, or had not a natural tendency to lead persons into sin.

Now I appeal to those who have made pretenses to serious religion and saving piety. You have formerly pretended to keep up religion in your closets, and in your own souls. Now seriously ask yourselves whether or no you have not found, that this practice has *indisposed* you to serious religion, and taken off your minds from it? Has it not tended to your neglect of secret prayer? And, if you have not wholly neglected it, have you not found, that you have been abundantly more ready to turn it off in *any* manner, and glad to have done with it? More backward to reading and serious meditation, and such things? And that your mind has been exceedingly diverted from religion, and that for some time? — I do not send you far off to find out whether this custom be not of bad tendency — not beyond the sea, but your own breast; there let the matter be determined.

Let us now try this custom by the effect which the outpouring of the Spirit of God on a people has with respect to it. This we are under great advantage to do; because there has lately been, in this place, the most

remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God, that has ever been in New England, and it may be in the world, since the apostles' days. And it is well known, that *before* then, the custom *did* prevail in the town; but *after,* the custom was altogether laid aside; and was so for several years. — No account can be given why the Spirit of God, and the flourishing of religion, should abolish such a custom, unless that custom be either in its nature or tendency an enemy to the Spirit of God, and to religion. — The fruits of the Spirit of God are good, and therefore it is good that this custom should be removed; for this is plainly one of the effects. And if so, it is because the custom is bad, either in its nature or tendency. Otherwise there would be no good in its being removed. The Spirit of God abolished this custom for this reason, because if it had been kept up in the town, it would have had a direct tendency to hinder that work which the Spirit was about to do amongst us. This was undeniably the reason.

Supposing such a custom had been begun and set up, by the young people all over the town, in the midst of the time of the late outpouring of the Spirit, all of a sudden; would any wise persons, that have truly the cause of religion at heart, rejoiced at it? Would not everyone have concluded, without any hesitation, that there was great danger that it would take off people's minds from religion, and make them vain; and so put an end to the flourishing of religion? Would not every considerate person have thought thus of it? And if such a custom would have had an ill tendency *then*, so it will *now*.

OBJECTION. The town is not in such circumstances now, as it was then, it might have done hurt then, by putting an end to the great concern. But now it may do no hurt; for there is now no such great concern to be interrupted by it.

ANSWER. Though the town is not in such circumstances now as it was then, yet there *ought* to be as much engagedness of mind about religion, as much concern among sinners, and as much engagedness among the godly, as then. And it is to our shame that there is not. And if such a practice would have tended to *destroy* such a religious concern then, it certainly tends to *prevent* it now. It is a rule that will hold, that what has

a tendency to destroy a thing when it is, tends to prevent when it is not. And are we not praying from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from day to day, for such a concern again? And do not those who pretend to be converted, and yet have lately set up this custom, pray for the same? Are you a convert, a saint, and yet not desire that there should be any more pouring out of the Spirit of God? The town has cause to be ashamed of such converts, if it has any such. And if ye do, why do you do what tends to prevent it.

Again, Let this practice be tried by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to it. Now we have a trial. It is now a time that religion is greatly decayed amongst us; and the effect is, that this custom comes in with this decay. Young people begin again to set up their old custom of *frolicking* (as it is called), and spending a great part of the night in it, to the violation of family order. What is the reason, if this custom is not bad, either in its nature or tendency, that it did not come in before, when religion was lively? Why does it stay till it can take the advantage of the withdrawment of religion? This is a sign that it is a custom that shuns a spirit of lively religion, as darkness shuns the light, and never comes in till light withdraws.

And here again, I would send persons to their own experience. How did this practice come in with you in particular; you, that two or three years ago seemed to be so engaged in religion? Did it not come in, did you not begin to practice it, as the sense of religion wore off? And what is the matter? Why did not you set up the practice then, when your heart was taken up about reading, meditation, and secret prayer to God? If this [does] not at all stand in the way of them, and is no hindrance to them, why [were] you not engaged in both together? What account can you give of it? Why did you leave off this practice and custom, or abstain from it? To what purpose is this changing? One while it must be avoided as evil, and another while practiced and pleaded for as good? The making of such an alteration does not look well, nor will it be for the honor of religion in the eye of the world. For whether the practice be lawful or not, yet such a thing will surely be improved to our disadvantage. For your avoiding it then has this appearance in the eye of the country, that then you condemned it. And therefore your now returning to it, will appear to

them as backsliding in you. Such changelings are evermore, in the eye of the world, greatly to the dishonor of their profession, let it be what it will.

Indeed, this customs, as it is practiced, does not only tend to sin, but is in itself very disorderly, sinful, and shameful. For it is attended late in the night, and in the dead of the night, to the neglect of family prayer, and violating all family order; which is disorder and profaneness. Is it lawful to rob God of his ordinary sacrifices, for the sake of your pleasure, diversion, and jollity? Are you of that mind, that it is a decent thing that the stated worship of the great God should give way to your mirth, and your diversions? Is this the way of God's holy children? Those works that are commonly done in the dead of night, seem to have a black mark set upon them by the apostle, and Christians are exhorted to avoid them. Rom. 13:12, 13, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness." The word here rendered *rioting* is of far different signification from the term, as used in our laws; for the forcible doing an unlawful thing, by three or more persons assembled together for that purpose. But the word here properly signifies, a *disorderly convention* of persons in order to spend their time together in pleasure and jollity. So the word is commonly used in Scripture. Pro. 23:20, "Be not amongst riotous eaters of flesh." Pro. 28:7, "He that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father." Luke 15:13, "Wasted his substance with riotous living." — Again, a black mark seems to be set on such in Scripture, as in 1 Thes. 5:5-7, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night."

Many of you that have lately set up this practice of frolicking and jollity, *profess* to be children of the light and of the day; and not to be the children of darkness. Therefore *walk as in the day;* and do not those works of darkness, that are commonly done at unseasonable hours of the night. Such things are not only condemned by the apostle, but are looked upon as infamous in all ages among sober people, as all past writings manifest. Therefore it is a thing of bad report, and so forbidden. Phil. 4:8,

“Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue — any praise, think on these things.”

OBJECTION. But the wise man allows of this practice, when he says, Ecc. 3:4, “There is a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

ANSWER. This is nothing to the purpose; for the utmost that any can pretend that it proves, is that it may be used under some circumstances; but not at all, that dancing and other things used by our young people in their frolics are lawful, in those circumstances: any more than what is said in the same chapter, verse 3. — “there is a time to kill,” proves that it is lawful for a man to commit murder. — To deny that dancing, under any circumstances, whatever, was lawful, would be absurd. For there was a religious dancing in the Jewish church, which was a way of expressing their spiritual mirth. So David danced before the Lord. And he calls upon others to praise God in the dance. So there may be other circumstances wherein dancing may not be unlawful. But all this makes nothing to the present purpose; to prove that this particular custom is not of a bad tendency. Besides, when the wise man says, “there is a time to dance” that does not prove, that the dead of the night is the time for it. The same wise man doth not justify carnal mirth, but condemns it. Ecc. 2:2, “I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?”

OBJECTION. If we avoid all such things, it will be the way for our young people to be ignorant how to behave themselves in company.

ANSWER. But consider what this objection comes to. It certainly comes to this, *viz.* that the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon a people, tends to banish all good conduct, good breeding, and decent behavior from among them; and to sink them down into clownishness and barbarity! The Spirit of God did actually put an end to this practice among us. — But who is not ashamed to make such an objection? Will any of our young converts talk thus? Will you, that think you were converted by the late pouring out of the Spirit of God, and are made holy persons, heirs of

eternal life, talk so blasphemously of it?

If our young people are resolute still to go on notwithstanding all that has been said, I hope that those of them who call themselves converted, will first find out some rational, satisfying answer to the arguments that have been used against it. This at least may be reasonably expected of them, seeing they make such a profession. You have this day been partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and therein solemnly renewed your profession. — If after such light set before you, and such mercy given, you will go on, be it known to you, that your eating now, and at other times, will prove only an eating and drinking judgment to yourselves.

And I desire heads of families, if they have any government over their children, or any command of their own houses, would not tolerate their children in such practices, nor suffer such conventions in their houses. — I do not desire that young people should be abridged of any lawful and proper liberties. But this custom can be of no benefit or service in the world. It tends only to mischief. — Satan doubtless would be glad to have such an interest amongst us as he used to have; and is therefore striving to steal in, while we are sleeping. But let us rouse up ourselves, in vigorously oppose his encroachments. I shall repeat those words of the apostle, Rom. 13:12-14, and leave them to the serious consideration of all persons, old and young. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

SECTION II

What things lead and expose to sin.

If anything be made out clearly, from reason and the Word of God, to be

our duty, this would be enough with all Christians. Will a follower of Christ stand objecting and disputing against what is irrefragably proved and demonstrated to be his duty?

But some may be ready to inquire, How shall we know what things do lead and expose to sin? Let a man do what he will, he cannot avoid sinning, as long as he has such a corrupt heart within him. And there is nothing a man can do, but he may find some temptation in it. And though it be true, that a man ought to avoid those things which have a special tendency to expose men to sin, are what we ought to shun, as much as in us lies — yet how shall we judge and determine what things have a natural tendency to sin, or do especially lead to it?

I would answer in some particulars which are plain and easy; and which cannot be denied without the greatest absurdity.

First, that which borders on those sins, to which the lusts of men's hearts strongly incline them, is of this sort. Men come into the world with many strong and violent lusts in their hearts, and are exceeding prone of themselves to transgress; even in the safest circumstances in which they can be placed. And surely so much the nearer they are to that sin, to which they are naturally inclined; so much the more are they exposed. If any of us who are parents should see our children near the brink of some deep pit, or close by the edge of the precipice of a high mountain; and not only so, but the ground upon which the child stood slippery, and steeply descending directly toward the precipice; should we not reckon a child exposed in such a case? Should we not be in haste to remove the child from its very dangerous situation?

It was the manner among the Israelites, to build their houses with flat roofs, so that persons might walk on the tops of their houses. And therefore God took care to make it a law among them, that every man should have battlements upon the edges of their roofs; lest any person should fall off and be killed. Deu. 22:8, "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." And certainly we ought to take the like care that we do not fall into sin; which carries in it eternal death. We should, as it were, fix a battlement, a guard, to keep us from

the edge of the precipice. Much more ought we to take care, that we do not go upon a roof that is not only without battlements, but when it is steep, and we shall naturally incline to fall. — Men's lusts are like strong enemies, endeavoring to draw them into sin. If a man stood upon a dangerous precipice, and had enemies about him, pulling and drawing him, endeavoring to throw him down; would he, in such a case, choose or dare to stand near the edge? Would he look upon himself safe, close on the brink? Would he not endeavor, for his own safety, to keep at a distance?

Second, those things that tend to feed lusts in the imagination, are of this kind. — They lead and expose men to sin. Those things that have a natural tendency to excite in the mind the imagination of that which is the object of the lust, certainly tend to feed and promote that lust. What can be more evident, than that a presenting of the object tends to stir up the appetite? Reason and experience teach this. — Therefore, all things, whether words or actions, which have a tendency and expose to sin, tend also to raise in the mind imaginations of what the lust tends to. It is certainly wrong to feed a lust, even in the imagination. It is quite contrary to the holy rules of God's words. Pro. 24:9, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Mat. 5:28, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery." A man, by gratifying his lusts in his imagination and thoughts, may make his soul in the sight of God to be a hold of foul spirits, and like a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. And sinful imaginations tend to sinful actions, and outward behavior in the end. Lust is always first conceived in the imagination, and then brought forth in the outward practice. You may see the progress of it in Jam. 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." — Such things are abominable in the sight of a pure and holy God. We are commanded to keep at a great distance from spiritual pollution; and to hate even the very "garment spotted with the flesh." Jude 23.

Third, those things that the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended or followed with sin, are of this sort. Experience is a good rule to determine by in things of this nature. How do we know the natural tendency of anything, but by observation and experience? Men observe and find, that some things are commonly attended and

followed with other things; and hence mankind pronounce, that they have a natural tendency to them. We have no other way to know the tendency of anything. Thus men by observation and experience know that the warmth of the sun, and showers of rain, are attended with the growth of plants; and hence they learn, that they have a tendency to it. So they find by experience, that the bite of some kinds of serpents is commonly followed with illness, and often with death; and hence they learn, that the bite of such serpents has a natural tendency to bring disorder upon the body, and exposes to death. — And so, if experience and common observation shows, that any particular practice or custom is commonly attended with that which is very sinful, we may safely conclude that such a practice *tends* to sin; that it leads and exposes to it.

Thus we may determine that tavern-haunting and gaming are things that tend to sin; because common experience and observation show, that those practices are attended with a great deal of sin, and wickedness. The observation of all ages and all nations, with one voice, declares it. It shows, where taverns are much frequented for drinking and the like, they are especially places of sin, of profaneness, and other wickedness; and it shows, that those towns, where is much of this, are places where no good generally prevails. And it also shows, that those persons that are given much to frequenting taverns are most commonly vicious persons. And so of gaming; as playing at cards, experience shows, that those persons that practice this, do generally fall into much sin. Hence these practices are become infamous among all sober virtuous persons.

Fourth, another way by which persons may determine of some things, that they lead and expose to sin, is by their own experience, or what they have found in themselves. — This surely is enough to convince them, that such things actually lead and expose to sin. For what will convince men, if their own experience will not? Thus if men have found by undeniable experience, that any practice or custom stirs up lust in them, and has betrayed them into foolish and sinful behavior, or sinful thoughts; they may determine that they lead to sin. If they, upon examining themselves, must own that a custom or practice has disposed them to the omission of known duty, such as secret or family prayer, and has indisposed them to reading and religious meditation — or if they find, since they have

complied with such a custom, they are less watchful of their hearts, less disposed to anything that is serious; that the frame of their mind is more light, and their hearts less disposed on the things of another world, and more after vanity — these are *sinful effects*. And therefore if experience shows a custom or practice to be attended with these things, then experience shows that they lead and expose to sin.

Fifth, we may determine whether a thing be of an evil tendency or not, by the effect that an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a general flourishing of religion, has with respect to it. If this puts a stop to any practice or custom, and roots it out; surely it argues, that that practice or custom is of no good tendency. For if there be no hurt in it, and it tends to no hurt, why should the Spirit of God destroy it? The Spirit of God has no tendency to destroy anything that is neither sinful, nor has any tendency to sin. Why should it? Why should we suppose, that he is an enemy to that which has no hurt in it; nor has any tendency to that which is hurtful?

The flourishing of religion has no tendency to abolish or expel anything that is no way against religion. That which is not against religion, religion will not appear against. It is a rule that holds in all contraries and opposites. The opposition is equal on both sides. So contrary as light is to darkness, so contrary is darkness to light. So contrary as the flourishing of religion is to any custom, just so contrary is that custom to the flourishing of religion. That custom that religion tends to destroy, that custom, if it prevail, tends also to destroy religion. Therefore, if the flourishing of religion, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God, tends to overthrow any custom, that takes place or prevails, we may surely determine, that that custom is either in itself sinful, or tends and exposes to evil.

Sixth, we may determine, by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to them, whether they be things of a sinful tendency or not. If they be things that come with a decay of religion, that creep in as that decays, we may determine they are things of no good tendency. The withdrawing of good does not let in good but evil. Evil, not good, comes in, as good gradually ceases.

Therefore, if there be any decay of religion in the town, or in particular persons, and upon this, any certain customs or practices take place and are allowed, which were wholly abstained from and renounced, when religion was in a more flourishing state; we may safely conclude that such customs and practices are contrary to the nature of true religion; and therefore in themselves sinful, or tending to sin.

Seventh, we may in good things determine whether any custom be of a good tendency, by considering what the effect would be, if it was openly and universally owned and practiced. There are many things which persons practice somewhat secretly, and which they plead to be not hurtful; but which if they had suitable consideration to discern the consequence of everybody openly practicing the same, would soon show a most woeful state of things. If therefore there be any custom, that will not bear universal open practice and profession; we may determine that *that* custom is of an ill tendency. For if it is neither sinful in itself, nor tends to anything sinful, then it is no matter how open it is: for we need not be afraid of that custom being too prevalent and universal, that has no ill tendency in it.

SECTION III

A serious warning to all, and especially young people.

Thus I have mentioned some general rules, by which to determine and judge, what things are of a bad and sinful tendency. And these things are so plain, that for a person to deny them, would be absurd and ridiculous. — I would now, in the name of God, *warn all persons* to avoid such things, as appear by these rules to lead and expose to sin. And particularly, I would take occasion to warn *young people,* as they would approve themselves fearers of God, to avoid all such things in company, that being tired by these rules, will appear to have a tendency to sin. Avoid all such ways of talking and acting as have a tendency to this; and follow the example of Joseph. Not only gross acts of uncleanness, but all

acts of lasciviousness, both in talking and acting, are strictly forbidden in Scripture; as what should not be so much as once named among saints or Christians. Gal. 5:9, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.” Eph. 5:3, 4, 5, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.” We should hate even the garment spotted with the flesh, *i.e.* should hate and shun all that, in the least degree, approaches to any such thing.

And I desire that certain customs, too common among young people, may be examined by those rules that have been mentioned. That custom in particular, of young people of different sexes reclining together — however little is made of it, and however ready people may be to laugh at its being condemned — if it be examined by the rules that have been mentioned, it will appear, past all contradiction, to be one of those that lead and expose to sin. And I believe experience and fact abundantly bear witness to it. It has been one main thing that has led to the growth of uncleanness in the land. And there are other customs and liberties, customarily used among young people in company, which they who use them know that they lead to sin. They know that they stir up their lusts; and this is the very end for which they do it, to gratify their lusts in some measure. Little do such persons consider, what a holy God they are soon to be judged by, who abominates the impurities of their hearts. — If therefore they do actually stir up and feed lust, then certainly tend to further degrees and more gross acts. That which stirs up lust, makes it more violent, and does therefore certainly the more expose persons to be overcome by it. How evident and undeniable are these things; and how strange that any should make a derision of them!

Possibly you may be confident of your own strength; and may think with yourself, that you are not in danger, that there is no temptation in these things, but what you are able easily to overcome. But you should consider that the most self-confidant are most in danger. Peter was very confidant that he should not deny Christ, but how dreadfully otherwise was the event! If others that have fallen into gross sins, should declare how it was

with them; doubtless they would say, that they at first thought there was no danger. They were far from the thought that ever they should commit such wickedness; but yet by venturing further and further, they fell at last into the foulest and grossest transgressions. Persons may long withstand temptation, and be suddenly be overcome at last. None so much in danger, as the most bold. They are most safe, who are most sensible of their own weakness; most distrustful of their own hearts; and most sensible of their continual need of restraining grace. Young persons, with respect to the sin of uncleanness, are dealt with by the devil, just as some give an account of serpents charming the birds and other animals down into their mouths. If the serpent takes them with his eyes, though they seem to be affrighted by it, yet they will not flee away, but will keep the serpent in sight, and approach nearer and nearer to him, till they fall a prey.

Another custom that I desire may be examined by the aforementioned rules, is that of young people of both sexes getting together in companies for mirth, and spending the time together till late in the night, in their jollity. I desire our young people to suffer their ears to be open to what I have to say upon this point; as I am the messenger of the Lord of hosts to them; and not determine that they will not hearken, before they have heard what I shall say. I hope there are but few persons among us so abandoned, as to determine that they will go on in a practice, whether they are convinced that it is unlawful or not; or though it should be proved to them to be unlawful by undeniable arguments. — Let us then examine this custom and practice by what has been said. It has been proved undeniably, that we ought not to go on in a practice that leads and exposes to sin; and rules have been laid down to judge what does thus expose and lead to it, which I think are plain and undeniable. Certainly a Christian will not be unwilling to have his practices examined and tried by the rules of reason and God's word; but will rather rejoice in it. And I desire particularly that the practice may be tried by that sure touchstone of experience. This is one of the rules of trial that have been mentioned; that any custom which the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended with sin, may be concluded to be unlawful. And if we look abroad in the country, I doubt not but these two things will be found.

First, that as to those *places*, where there is most of this carried on among young people (as there is more of it in some places than others), it will be found, as a thing that universally holds, that the young people there are commonly a loose, vain, and irreligious generation; little regarding God, heaven or hell, or anything but vanity. And that commonly in those towns where most frolicking is carried on, there are the most frequent breakings out of gross sins; fornication in particular.

Second, if we go though the country, we shall for the most part find, that those *persons* who are most addicted to this practice, are the furthest from serious thought, and are the vainest and loosest upon other accounts. And whence should this be, if such a practice was not sinful, or had not a natural tendency to lead persons into sin.

Now I appeal to those who have made pretenses to serious religion and saving piety. You have formerly pretended to keep up religion in your closets, and in your own souls. Now seriously ask yourselves whether or no you have not found, that this practice has *indisposed* you to serious religion, and taken off your minds from it? Has it not tended to your neglect of secret prayer? And, if you have not wholly neglected it, have you not found, that you have been abundantly more ready to turn it off in *any* manner, and glad to have done with it? More backward to reading and serious meditation, and such things? And that your mind has been exceedingly diverted from religion, and that for some time? — I do not send you far off to find out whether this custom be not of bad tendency — not beyond the sea, but your own breast; there let the matter be determined.

Let us now try this custom by the effect which the outpouring of the Spirit of God on a people has with respect to it. This we are under great advantage to do; because there has lately been, in this place, the most remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God, that has ever been in New England, and it may be in the world, since the apostles' days. And it is well known, that *before* then, the custom *did* prevail in the town; but *after,* the custom was altogether laid aside; and was so for several years. — No account can be given why the Spirit of God, and the flourishing of religion, should abolish such a custom, unless that custom be either in its nature or tendency an enemy to the Spirit of God, and to religion. — The

fruits of the Spirit of God are good, and therefore it is good that this custom should be removed; for this is plainly one of the effects. And if so, it is because the custom is bad, either in its nature or tendency. Otherwise there would be no good in its being removed. The Spirit of God abolished this custom for this reason, because if it had been kept up in the town, it would have had a direct tendency to hinder that work which the Spirit was about to do amongst us. This was undeniably the reason.

Supposing such a custom had been begun and set up, by the young people all over the town, in the midst of the time of the late outpouring of the Spirit, all of a sudden; would any wise persons, that have truly the cause of religion at heart, rejoiced at it? Would not everyone have concluded, without any hesitation, that there was great danger that it would take off people's minds from religion, and make them vain; and so put an end to the flourishing of religion? Would not every considerate person have thought thus of it? And if such a custom would have had an ill tendency *then*, so it will *now*.

OBJECTION. The town is not in such circumstances now, as it was then, it might have done hurt then, by putting an end to the great concern. But now it may do no hurt; for there is now no such great concern to be interrupted by it.

ANSWER. Though the town is not in such circumstances now as it was then, yet there *ought* to be as much engagedness of mind about religion, as much concern among sinners, and as much engagedness among the godly, as then. And it is to our shame that there is not. And if such a practice would have tended to *destroy* such a religious concern then, it certainly tends to *prevent* it now. It is a rule that will hold, that what has a tendency to destroy a thing when it is, tends to prevent when it is not. And are we not praying from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from day to day, for such a concern again? And do not those who pretend to be converted, and yet have lately set up this custom, pray for the same? Are you a convert, a saint, and yet not desire that there should be any more pouring out of the Spirit of God? The town has cause to be ashamed of such converts, if it has any such. And if ye do, why do you do what tends to

prevent it.

Again, Let this practice be tried by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to it. Now we have a trial. It is now a time that religion is greatly decayed amongst us; and the effect is, that this custom comes in with this decay. Young people begin again to set up their old custom of *frolicking* (as it is called), and spending a great part of the night in it, to the violation of family order. What is the reason, if this custom is not bad, either in its nature or tendency, that it did not come in before, when religion was lively? Why does it stay till it can take the advantage of the withdrawment of religion? This is a sign that it is a custom that shuns a spirit of lively religion, as darkness shuns the light, and never comes in till light withdraws.

And here again, I would send persons to their own experience. How did this practice come in with you in particular; you, that two or three years ago seemed to be so engaged in religion? Did it not come in, did you not begin to practice it, as the sense of religion wore off? And what is the matter? Why did not you set up the practice then, when your heart was taken up about reading, meditation, and secret prayer to God? If this [does] not at all stand in the way of them, and is no hindrance to them, why [were] you not engaged in both together? What account can you give of it? Why did you leave off this practice and custom, or abstain from it? To what purpose is this changing? One while it must be avoided as evil, and another while practiced and pleaded for as good? The making of such an alteration does not look well, nor will it be for the honor of religion in the eye of the world. For whether the practice be lawful or not, yet such a thing will surely be improved to our disadvantage. For your avoiding it then has this appearance in the eye of the country, that then you condemned it. And therefore your now returning to it, will appear to them as backsliding in you. Such changelings are evermore, in the eye of the world, greatly to the dishonor of their profession, let it be what it will.

Indeed, this customs, as it is practiced, does not only tend to sin, but is in itself very disorderly, sinful, and shameful. For it is attended late in the night, and in the dead of the night, to the neglect of family prayer, and violating all family order; which is disorder and profaneness. Is it lawful to rob God of his ordinary sacrifices, for the sake of your pleasure,

diversion, and jollity? Are you of that mind, that it is a decent thing that the stated worship of the great God should give way to your mirth, and your diversions? Is this the way of God's holy children? Those works that are commonly done in the dead of night, seem to have a black mark set upon them by the apostle, and Christians are exhorted to avoid them. Rom. 13:12, 13, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and wantonness." The word here rendered *rioting* is of far different signification from the term, as used in our laws; for the forcible doing an unlawful thing, by three or more persons assembled together for that purpose. But the word here properly signifies, a *disorderly convention* of persons in order to spend their time together in pleasure and jollity. So the word is commonly used in Scripture. Pro. 23:20, "Be not amongst riotous eaters of flesh." Pro. 28:7, "He that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father." Luke 15:13, "Wasted his substance with riotous living." — Again, a black mark seems to be set on such in Scripture, as in 1 Thes. 5:5-7, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night."

Many of you that have lately set up this practice of frolicking and jollity, *profess* to be children of the light and of the day; and not to be the children of darkness. Therefore *walk as in the day;* and do not those works of darkness, that are commonly done at unseasonable hours of the night. Such things are not only condemned by the apostle, but are looked upon as infamous in all ages among sober people, as all past writings manifest. Therefore it is a thing of bad report, and so forbidden. Phil. 4:8, "Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue — any praise, think on these things."

OBJECTION. But the wise man allows of this practice, when he says, Ecc. 3:4, "There is a time to mourn and a time to dance."

ANSWER. This is nothing to the purpose; for the utmost that any can

pretend that it proves, is that it may be used under some circumstances; but not at all, that dancing and other things used by our young people in their frolics are lawful, in those circumstances: any more than what is said in the same chapter, verse 3. — "there is a time to kill," proves that it is lawful for a man to commit murder. — To deny that dancing, under any circumstances, whatever, was lawful, would be absurd. For there was a religious dancing in the Jewish church, which was a way of expressing their spiritual mirth. So David danced before the Lord. And he calls upon others to praise God in the dance. So there may be other circumstances wherein dancing may not be unlawful. But all this makes nothing to the present purpose; to prove that this particular custom is not of a bad tendency. Besides, when the wise man says, "there is a time to dance" that does not prove, that the dead of the night is the time for it. The same wise man doth not justify carnal mirth, but condemns it. Ecc. 2:2, "I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?"

OBJECTION. If we avoid all such things, it will be the way for our young people to be ignorant how to behave themselves in company.

ANSWER. But consider what this objection comes to. It certainly comes to this, *viz.* that the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon a people, tends to banish all good conduct, good breeding, and decent behavior from among them; and to sink them down into clownishness and barbarity! The Spirit of God did actually put an end to this practice among us. — But who is not ashamed to make such an objection? Will any of our young converts talk thus? Will you, that think you were converted by the late pouring out of the Spirit of God, and are made holy persons, heirs of eternal life, talk so blasphemously of it?

If our young people are resolute still to go on notwithstanding all that has been said, I hope that those of them who call themselves converted, will first find out some rational, satisfying answer to the arguments that have been used against it. This at least may be reasonably expected of them, seeing they make such a profession. You have this day been partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and therein solemnly renewed your profession. — If after such light set before you, and such mercy given, you

will go on, be it known to you, that your eating now, and at other times, will prove only an eating and drinking judgment to yourselves.

And I desire heads of families, if they have any government over their children, or any command of their own houses, would not tolerate their children in such practices, nor suffer such conventions in their houses. — I do not desire that young people should be abridged of any lawful and proper liberties. But this custom can be of no benefit or service in the world. It tends only to mischief. — Satan doubtless would be glad to have such an interest amongst us as he used to have; and is therefore striving to steal in, while we are sleeping. But let us rouse up ourselves, in vigorously oppose his encroachments. I shall repeat those words of the apostle, Rom. 13:12-14, and leave them to the serious consideration of all persons, old and young. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

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The Trinity

It is common when speaking of the Divine happiness to say that God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of Himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, His own essence and perfection, and accordingly it must be supposed that God perpetually and eternally has a most perfect idea of Himself, as it were an exact image and representation of Himself ever before Him and in actual view, and from hence arises a most pure and perfect act or energy in the Godhead, which is the Divine love, complacence and joy. The knowledge or view which God has of Himself must necessarily be conceived to be something

distinct from His mere direct existence. There must be something that answers to our reflection. The reflection as we reflect on our own minds carries something of imperfection in it. However, if God beholds Himself so as thence to have delight and joy in Himself He must become his own object. There must be a duplicity. There is God and the idea of God, if it be proper to call a conception of that that is purely spiritual an idea.

If a man could have an absolutely perfect idea of all that passed in his mind, all the series of ideas and exercises in every respect perfect as to order, degree, circumstance and for any particular space of time past, suppose the last hour, he would really to all intents and purpose be over again what he was that last hour. And if it were possible for a man by reflection perfectly to contemplate all that is in his own mind in an hour, as it is and at the same time that it is there in its first and direct existence; if a man, that is, had a perfect reflex or contemplative idea of every thought at the same moment or moments that that thought was and of every exercise at and during the same time that that exercise was, and so through a whole hour, a man would really be two during that time, he would be indeed double, he would be twice at once. The idea he has of himself would be himself again.

Note, by having a reflex or contemplative idea of what passes in our own minds I don't mean consciousness only. There is a great difference between a man's having a view of himself, reflex or contemplative idea of himself so as to delight in his own beauty or excellency, and a mere direct consciousness. Or if we mean by consciousness of what is in our own minds anything besides the mere simple existence in our minds of what is there, it is nothing but a power by reflection to view or contemplate what passes.

Therefore as God with perfect clearness, fullness and strength, understands Himself, views His own essence (in which there is no distinction of substance and act but which is wholly substance and wholly act), that idea which God hath of Himself is absolutely Himself. This representation of the Divine nature and essence is the Divine nature and essence again: so that by God's thinking of the Deity must certainly be generated. Hereby there is another person begotten, there is another Infinite Eternal Almighty and most holy and the same God, the very same

Divine nature.

And this Person is the second person in the Trinity, the Only Begotten and dearly Beloved Son of God; He is the eternal, necessary, perfect, substantial and personal idea which God hath of Himself; and that it is so seems to me to be abundantly confirmed by the Word of God.

Nothing can more agree with the account the Scripture gives us of the Son of God, His being in the form of God and His express and perfect image and representation: (II Cor. 4:4) "Lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ Who is the image of God should shine unto them." (Phil. 2:6) "Who being in the form of God." (Col. 1:15) "Who is the image of the invisible God." (Heb. 1:3) "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."

Christ is called the face of God (Exod. 33:14): the word [A.V. presence] in the original signifies face, looks, form or appearance. Now what can be so properly and fitly called so with respect to God as God's own perfect idea of Himself whereby He has every moment a view of His own essence: this idea is that "face of God" which God sees as a man sees his own face in a looking glass. 'Tis of such form or appearance whereby God eternally appears to Himself. The root that the original word comes from signifies to look upon or behold: now what is that which God looks upon or beholds in so eminent a manner as He doth on His own idea or that perfect image of Himself which He has in view. This is what is eminently in God's presence and is therefore called the angel of God's presence or face (Isa. 63:9). But that the Son of God is God's own eternal and perfect idea is a thing we have yet much more expressly revealed in God's Word. First, in that Christ is called "the wisdom of God." If we are taught in the Scripture that Christ is the same with God's wisdom or knowledge, then it teaches us that He is the same with God's perfect and eternal idea. They are the same as we have already observed and I suppose none will deny. But Christ is said to be the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:24, Luke 11:49, compare with Matt. 23:34); and how much doth Christ speak in Proverbs under the name of Wisdom especially in the 8th chapter.

The Godhead being thus begotten by God's loving an idea of Himself and shewing forth in a distinct subsistence or person in that idea, there

proceeds a most pure act, and an infinitely holy and sacred energy arises between the Father and Son in mutually loving and delighting in each other, for their love and joy is mutual, (Prov. 8:30) "I was daily His delight rejoicing always before Him." This is the eternal and most perfect and essential act of the Divine nature, wherein the Godhead acts to an infinite degree and in the most perfect manner possible. The Deity becomes all act, the Divine essence itself flows out and is as it were breathed forth in love and joy. So that the Godhead therein stands forth in yet another manner of subsistence, and there proceeds the third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, viz., the Deity in act, for there is no other act but the act of the will.

We may learn by the Word of God that the Godhead or the Divine nature and essence does subsist in love. (I John 4:8) "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." In the context of which place I think it is plainly intimated to us that the Holy Spirit is that Love, as in the 12th and 13th verses. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us; hereby know we that we dwell in Him ... because He hath given us of His Spirit." 'Tis the same argument in both verses. In the 12th verse the apostle argues that if we have love dwelling in us we have God dwelling in us, and in the 13th verse He clears the force of the argument by this that love is God's Spirit. Seeing we have God's Spirit dwelling in us, we have God dwelling in [in us], supposing it as a thing granted and allowed that God's Spirit is God. 'Tis evident also by this that God's dwelling in us and His love or the love that He hath exerciseth, being in us, are the same thing. The same is intimated in the same manner in the last verse of the foregoing chapter. The apostle was, in the foregoing verses, speaking of love as a sure sign of sincerity and our acceptance with God, beginning with the 18th verse, and he sums up the argument thus in the last verse, "and hereby do we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit that He hath given us."

The Scripture seems in many places to speak of love in Christians as if it were the same with the Spirit of God in them, or at least as the prime and most natural breathing and acting of the Spirit in the soul. (Phil. 2:1) "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye

be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (II Cor. 6:6) "By kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned." (Romans 15:30) "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." (Col. 1:8) "Who declared unto us your love in the Spirit." (Rom. 5:5) "Having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." (Gal. 5:13-16) "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." The Apostle argues that Christian liberty does not make way for fulfilling the lusts of the flesh in biting and devouring one another and the like, because a principle of love which was the fulfilling of the law would prevent it, and in the 16th verse he asserts the same thing in other words: "This I say then walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

The third and last office of the Holy Spirit is to comfort and delight the souls of God's people, and thus one of His names is the Comforter, and thus we have the phrase of "joy in the Holy Ghost." (I Thess. 1:6) "Having received the Word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14: 17) "The kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:31) "Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." But how well doth this agree with the Holy Ghost being God's joy and delight, (Acts 13:52) "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost"--meaning as I suppose that they were filled with spiritual joy.

This is confirmed by the symbol of the Holy Ghost, viz., a dove, which is the emblem of love or a lover, and is so used in Scripture, and especially often so in Solomon's Song, (1:15) "Behold thou art fair; my love, behold thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes:" i.e. "Eyes of love," and again 4:1, the same words; and 5:12, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves," and 5:2, "My love, my dove," and 2:14 and 6:9; and this I believe to be the reason that the dove alone of all birds (except the sparrow in the single case of the leprosy) was appointed to be offered in sacrifice because of its innocence and because it is the emblem of love, love being the most acceptable

sacrifice to God. It was under this similitude that the Holy Ghost descended from the Father on Christ at His baptism, signifying the infinite love of the Father to the Son, Who is the true David, or beloved, as we said before.

The same was signified by what was exhibited to the eye in the appearance there was of the Holy Ghost descending from the Father to the Son in the shape of a dove, as was signified by what was exhibited to the eye in the voice there was at the same time, viz., "This is My well Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."

(That God's love or His loving kindness is the same with the Holy Ghost seems to be plain by Psalm 36:7-9, "How excellent (or how precious as 'tis in the Hebrew) is Thy loving-kindness O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings, they shall be abundantly satisfied (in the Hebrew "watered") with the fatness of Thy house and Thou shalt make them to drink of the river of Thy pleasures; for with Thee is the fountain of life and in Thy light shall we see light."

Doubtless that precious loving-kindness and that fatness of God's house and river of His pleasures and the water of the fountain of life and God's light here spoken [of] are the same thing; by which we learn that the Holy anointing oil that was kept in the House of God, which was a type of the Holy Ghost, represented God's love, and that the "River of water of life" spoken of in the 22nd [chapter] of Revelation, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, which is the same with Ezekiel's vision of Living and life-giving water, which is here [in Ps. 36] called the "Fountain of life and river of God's pleasures," is God's loving-kindness.

But Christ Himself expressly teaches us that by spiritual fountains and rivers of water of life is meant the Holy Ghost. (John 4:14; 7:38,39).That by the river of God's pleasures here is meant the same thing with the pure river of water of life spoken of in Revelation 22:1, will be much confirmed if we compare those verses with Revelation 21:23, 24; 22:1,5. (See the notes on chapters 21, 23, 24) I think if we compare these places and weigh them we cannot doubt but that it is the same happines2 that is meant in this Psalm which is spoken of there.)

So this well agrees with the similitudes and metaphors that are used about the Holy Ghost in Scripture, such as water, fire, breath, wind, oil, wine, a spring, a river, a being poured out and shed forth, and a being breathed forth. Can there any spiritual thing be thought, or anything belonging to any spiritual being to which such kind of metaphors so naturally agree, as to the affection of a Spirit. The affection, love or joy, may be said to flow out as water or to be breathed forth as breath or wind. But it would [not] sound so well to say that an idea or judgment flows out or is breathed forth.

It is no way different to say of the affection that it is warm, or to compare love to fire, but it would not seem natural to say the same of perception or reason. It seems natural enough to say that the soul is poured out in affection or that love or delight are shed abroad: (Rom. 5:5) "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," but it suits with nothing else belonging to a spiritual being.

This is that "river of water of life" spoken of in the 22nd [chapter] of Revelation, which proceeds from the throne of the Father and the Son, for the rivers of living water or water of life are the Holy Ghost, by the same apostle's own interpretation (John 7:38, 39); and the Holy Ghost being the infinite delight and pleasure of God, the river is called the river of God's pleasures (Ps. 36:8), not God's river of pleasures, which I suppose signifies the same as the fatness of God's House, which they that trust in God shall be watered with, by which fatness of God's House I suppose is signified the same thing which oil typifies.

It is a confirmation that the Holy Ghost is God's love and delight, because the saints communion with God consists in their partaking of the Holy Ghost. The communion of saints is twofold: 'tis their communion with God and communion with one another, (I John 1:3) "That ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Communion is a common partaking of good, either of excellency or happiness, so that when it is said the saints have communion or fellowship with the Father and with the Son, the meaning of it is that they partake with the Father and the Son of their good, which is either their excellency and glory (II Peter 1:4), "Ye are made partakers of the Divine nature"; Heb. 12:10, "That we might be partakers of His

holiness;" John 17:22, 23, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and Thou in Me"); or of their joy and happiness: (John 17:13) "That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

But the Holy Ghost being the love and joy of God is His beauty and happiness, and it is in our partaking of the same Holy Spirit that our communion with God consists: (II Cor. 13:14) "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." They are not different benefits but the same that the Apostle here wisheth, viz., the Holy Ghost: in partaking of the Holy Ghost, we possess and enjoy the love and grace of the Father and the Son, for the Holy Ghost is that love and grace, and therefore I suppose it is that in that forementioned place, (I John 1:3). We are said to have fellowship with the Son and not with the Holy Ghost, because therein consists our fellowship with the Father and the Son, even in partaking with them of the Holy Ghost.

In this also eminently consists our communion with the Son that we drink into the same Spirit. This is the common excellency and joy and happiness in which they all are united; 'tis the bond of perfectness by which they are one in the Father and the Son as the Father is in the Son.

I can think of no other good account that can be given of the apostle Paul's wishing grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in the beginning of his Epistles, without ever mentioning the Holy Ghost, - as we find it thirteen times in his salutations in the beginnings of his Epistles, - but [i.e., except] that the Holy Ghost is Himself love and grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and in his blessing at the end of his second Epistle to the Corinthians where all three Persons are mentioned he wishes grace and love from the Son and the Father [except that] in the communion or the partaking of the Holy Ghost, the blessing is from the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost. But the blessing from the Holy Ghost is Himself, the communication of Himself. Christ promises that He and the Father will love believers (John 14:21,23), but no mention is made of the Holy Ghost, and the love of Christ and the love of the Father are often distinctly mentioned, but never any mention of the Holy Ghost's love.

(This I suppose to be the reason why we have never any account of the Holy Ghost's loving either the Father or the Son, or of the Son's or the Father's loving the Holy Ghost, or of the Holy Ghost's loving the saints, tho these things are so often predicated of both the other Persons.)

And this I suppose to be that blessed Trinity that we read of in the Holy Scriptures. The Father is the Deity subsisting in the prime, un-originated and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence. The Son is the Deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the Deity subsisting in act, or the Divine essence flowing out and breathed forth in God's Infinite love to and delight in Himself. And I believe the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct Persons.

It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God which must be understood of real attributes and not of mere modalities. If a man should tell me that the immutability of God is God, or that the omnipresence of God and authority of God is God, I should not be able to think of any rational meaning of what he said. It hardly sounds to me proper to say that God's being without change is God, or that God's being everywhere is God, or that God's having a right of government over creatures is God.

But if it be meant that the real attributes of God, viz., His understanding and love are God, then what we have said may in some measure explain how it is so, for Deity subsists in them distinctly; so they are distinct Divine Persons.

One of the principal objections that I can think of against what has been supposed is concerning the Personality of the Holy Ghost - that this scheme of things does not seem well to consist with [the fact] that a person is that which hath understanding and will. If the three in the Godhead are Persons they doubtless each of them have understanding, but this makes the understanding one distinct person and love another. How therefore can this love be said to have understanding, (Here I would observe that divines have not been wont to suppose that these three had

three distinct understandings, but all one and the same understanding.)

In order to clear up this matter let it be considered that the whole Divine office is supposed truly and properly to subsist in each of these three, viz., God and His understanding and love, and that there is such a wonderful union between them that they are, after an ineffable and inconceivable manner, One in Another, so that One hath Another and they have communion in One Another and are as it were predicable One of Another; as Christ said of Himself and the Father "I am in the Father and the Father in Me," so may it be said concerning all the Persons in the Trinity, the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, the Holy Ghost is in the Father, and the Father in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Ghost, and the Father understands because the Son Who is the Divine understanding is in Him, the Father loves because the Holy Ghost is in Him, so the Son loves because the Holy Ghost is in Him and proceeds from Him, so the Holy Ghost or the Divine essence subsisting is Divine, but understands because the Son the Divine Idea is in Him.

Understanding may be predicated of this love because it is the love of the understanding both objectively and subjectively. God loves the understanding and that understanding also flows out in love so that the Divine understanding is in the Deity subsisting in love. It is not a blind love. Even in creatures there is consciousness included in the very nature of the will or act of the soul, and tho perhaps not so that it can so properly be said that it is a seeing or undemanding will, yet it may truly and properly be said so in God by reason of God's infinitely more perfect manner of acting so that the whole Divine essence flows out and subsists in this act, and the Son is in the Holy Spirit tho it does not proceed from Him by reason (of the fact) that the understanding must be considered as prior in the order of nature to the will or love or act, both in creatures and in the Creator. The understanding is so in the Spirit that the Spirit may be said to know, as the Spirit of God is truly and perfectly said to know and to search all things, even the deep things of God.

(All the Three are Persons for they all have understanding and will. There is understanding and will in the Father, as the Son and the Holy Ghost are in Him and proceed from Him. There is understanding and will in the

Son, as He is understanding and as the Holy Ghost is in Him and proceeds from Him. There is understanding and will in the Holy Ghost as He is the Divine will and as the Son is in Him.

Nor is it to be looked upon as a strange and unreasonable figment that the Persons should be said to have an understanding or love by another person's being in them, for we have Scripture ground to conclude so concerning the Father's having wisdom and understanding or reason that it is by the Son's being in Him; because we are there informed that He is the wisdom and reason and truth of God, and hereby God is wise by His own wisdom being in Him. Understanding and wisdom is in the Father as the Son is in Him and proceeds from Him. Understanding is in the Holy Ghost because the Son is in Him, not as proceeding from Him but as flowing out in Him.)

But I don't pretend fully to explain how these things are and I am sensible a hundred other objections may be made and puzzling doubts and questions raised that I can't solve. I am far from pretending to explaining the Trinity so as to render it no longer a mystery. I think it to be the highest and deepest of all Divine mysteries still, notwithstanding anything that I have said or conceived about it. I don't intend to explain the Trinity. But Scripture with reason may lead to say something further of it than has been wont to be said, tho there are still left many things pertaining to it incomprehensible.

It seems to me that what I have here supposed concerning the Trinity is exceeding analogous to the Gospel scheme and agreeable to the tenor of the whole New Testament and abundantly illustrative of Gospel doctrines, as might be particularly shown, would it not exceedingly lengthen out this discourse.

I shall only now briefly observe that many things that have been wont to be said by orthodox divines about the Trinity are hereby illustrated. Hereby we see how the Father is the fountain of the Godhead, and why when He is spoken of in Scripture He is so often, without any addition or distinction, called God, which has led some to think that He only was truly and properly God. Hereby we may see why in the economy of the Persons of the Trinity the Father should sustain the dignity of the Deity,

that the Father should have it as His office to uphold and maintain the rights of the Godhead and should be God not only by essence, but as it were, by His economical office.

Hereby is illustrated the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Proceeding [from] both the Father and the Son. Hereby we see how that it is possible for the Son to be begotten by the Father and the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and Son, and yet that all the Persons should be Co-etemal. Hereby we may more clearly understand the equality of the Persons among themselves, and that they are every way equal in the society or family of the three.

They are equal in honor: besides the honor which is common to them all, viz., that they are all God, each has His peculiar honor in the society or family. They are equal not only in essence, but the Father's honor is that He is, as it were, the Author of perfect and Infinite wisdom. The Son's honor is that He is that perfect and Divine wisdom itself the excellency of which is that from whence arises the honor of being the author or Generator of it. The honor of the Father and the Son is that they are infinitely excellent, or that from them infinite excellency proceeds; but the honor of the Holy Ghost is equal for He is that Divine excellency and beauty itself.

'Tis the honor of the Father and the Son that they are infinitely holy and are the fountain of holiness, but the honor of the Holy Ghost is that holiness itself. The honor of the Father and the Son is [that] they are infinitely happy and are the original and fountain of happiness and the honor of the Holy Ghost is equal for He is infinite happiness and joy itself.

The honor of the Father is that He is the fountain of the Deity as He from Whom proceed both the Divine wisdom and also excellency and happiness. The honor of the Son is equal for He is Himself the Divine wisdom and is He from Whom proceeds the Divine excellency and happiness, and the honor of the Holy Ghost is equal for He is the beauty and happiness of both the other Persons.

By this also we may fully understand the equality of each Person's

concern in the work of redemption, and the equality of the Redeemed's concern with them and dependence upon them, and the equality and honor and praise due to each of them. Glory belongs to the Father and the Son that they so greatly loved the world: to the Father that He so loved that He gave His Only Begotten Son: to the Son that He so loved the world as to give up Himself.

But there is equal glory due to the Holy Ghost for He is that love of the Father and the Son to the world. Just so much as the two first Persons glorify themselves by showing the astonishing greatness of their love and grace, just so much is that wonderful love and grace glorified Who is the Holy Ghost. It shows the Infinite dignity and excellency of the Father that the Son so delighted and prized His honor and glory that He stooped infinitely low rather than [that] men's salvation should be to the injury of that honor and glory.

It showed the infinite excellency and worth of the Son that the Father so delighted in Him that for His sake He was ready to quit His anger and receive into favor those that had [deserved?] infinitely ill at His Hands, and what was done shows how great the excellency and worth of the Holy Ghost Who is that delight which the Father and the Son have in each other: it shows it to be Infinite. So great as the worth of a thing delighted in is to any one, so great is the worth of that delight and joy itself which he has in it.

Our dependence is equally upon each in this office. The Father appoints and provides the Redeemer, and Himself accepts the price and grants the thing purchased; the Son is the Redeemer by offering Himself and is the price; and the Holy Ghost immediately communicates to us the thing purchased by communicating Himself, and He is the thing purchased. The sum of all that Christ purchased for men was the Holy Ghost: (Gal. 3:13,14) "He was made a curse for us... that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

What Christ purchased for us was that we have communion with God [which] is His good, which consists in partaking of the Holy Ghost: as we have shown, all the blessedness of the Redeemed consists in their partaking of Christ's fullness, which consists in partaking of that Spirit

which is given not by measure unto him: the oil that is poured on the head of the Church runs down to the members of His body and to the skirts of His garment (Ps. 133:2). Christ purchased for us that we should have the favor of God and might enjoy His love, but this love is the Holy Ghost.

Christ purchased for us true spiritual excellency, grace and holiness, the sum of which is love to God, which is [nothing] but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the heart. Christ purchased for us spiritual joy and comfort, which is in a participation of God's joy and happiness, which joy and happiness is the Holy Ghost as we have shown. The Holy Ghost is the sum of all good things. Good things and the Holy Spirit are synonymous expressions in Scripture: (Matt. 7:11) "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The sum of all spiritual good which the finite have in this world is that spring of living water within them which we read of (John 4:10), and those rivers of living water flowing out of them which we read of (John 7:38,39), which we are there told means the Holy Ghost; and the sum of all happiness in the other world is that river of water of life which proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb, which we read of (Rev. 22:1), which is the River of God's pleasures and is the Holy Ghost and therefore the sum of the Gospel invitation to come and take the water of life (verse 17).

The Holy Ghost is the purchased possession and inheritance of the saints, as appears because that little of it which the saints have in this world is said to be the earnest of that purchased inheritance. (Eph. 1:14) Tis an earnest of that which we are to have a fullness of hereafter. (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5) The Holy Ghost is the great subject of all Gospel promises and therefore is called the Spirit of promise. (Eph. 1:13) This is called the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49), and the like in other places. (If the Holy Ghost be a comprehension of all good things promised in the Gospel, we may easily see the force of the Apostle's arguing (Gal. 3:2), "This only would I know, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?") So that it is God of Whom our good is purchased and it is God that purchases it and it is God also that is the thing purchased.

Thus all our good things are of God and through God and in God, as we

read in Romans 11:36: "For of Him and through Him and to Him (or in Him as *eis* is rendered, I Cor. 8:6) are all things." "To Whom be glory forever." All our good is of God the Father, it is all through God the Son, and all is in the Holy Ghost as He is Himself all our good. God is Himself the portion and purchased inheritance of His people. Thus God is the Alpha and the Omega in this affair of redemption.

If we suppose no more than used to be supposed about the Holy Ghost, the concern of the Holy Ghost in the work of redemption is not equal with the Father's and the Son's, nor is there an equal part of the glory of this work belonging to Him: merely to apply to us or immediately to give or hand to us the blessing purchased, after it was purchased, as subservient to the other two Persons, is but a little thing [compared] to the purchasing of it by the paying an Infinite price, by Christ offering up Himself in sacrifice to procure it, and it is but a little thing to God the Father's giving His infinitely dear Son to be a sacrifice for us and upon His purchase to afford to us all the blessings of His purchased.

But according to this there is an equality. To be the love of God to the world is as much as for the Father and the Son to do so much from love to the world, and to be the thing purchased was as much as to be the price. The price and the thing bought with that price are equal. And it is as much as to afford the thing purchased, for the glory that belongs to Him that affords the thing purchased arises from the worth of that thing that He affords and therefore it is the same glory and an equal glory; the glory of the thing itself is its worth and that is also the glory of him that affords it.

There are two more eminent and remarkable images of the Trinity among the creatures. The one is in the spiritual creation, the soul of man. There is the mind, and the understanding or idea, and the spirit of the mind as it is called in Scripture, i.e., the disposition, the will or affection. The other is in the visible creation, viz., the Sun. The father is as the substance of the Sun. (By substance I don't mean in a philosophical sense, but the Sun as to its internal constitution.) The Son is as the brightness and glory of the disk of the Sun or that bright and glorious form under which it appears to our eyes. The Holy Ghost is the action of the Sun which is within the Sun in its intestine heat, and, being diffusive, enlightens,

warms, enlivens and comforts the world. The Spirit as it is God's Infinite love to Himself and happiness in Himself, is as the internal heat of the Sun, but as it is that by which God communicates Himself, it is as the emanation of the sun's action, or the emitted beams of the sun.

The various sorts of rays of the sun and their beautiful colors do well represent the Spirit. They well represent the love and grace of God and were made use of for this purpose in the rainbow after the flood, and I suppose also in that rainbow that was seen round about the throne by Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28; Rev. 4:3) and round the head of Christ by John (Rev. 10:1), or the amiable excellency of God and the various beautiful graces and virtues of the Spirit. These beautiful colors of the sunbeams we find made use of in Scripture for this purpose, viz., to represent the graces of the Spirit, as (Ps. 68:13) "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," i.e., like the light reflected in various beautiful colors from the feathers of a dove, which colors represent the graces of the Heavenly Dove.

The same I suppose is signified by the various beautiful colors reflected from the precious stones of the breastplate, and that these spiritual ornaments of the Church are what are represented by the various colors of the foundation and gates of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21; Isaiah 54:11, etc.) and the stones of the Temple (I Chron. 29: 2); and I believe the variety there is in the rays of the Sun and their beautiful colors was designed by the Creator for this very purpose, and indeed that the whole visible creation which is but the shadow of being is so made and ordered by God as to typify and represent spiritual things, for which I could give many reasons. (I don't propose this merely as an hypothesis but as a part of Divine truth sufficiently and fully ascertained by the revelation God has made in the Holy Scriptures.)

I am sensible what kind of objections many will be ready to make against what has been said, what difficulties will be immediately found, How can this be? And how can that be!

I am far from affording this as any explication of this mystery, that unfolds and renews the mysteriousness and incomprehensibleness of it,

for I am sensible that however by what has been said some difficulties are lessened, others that are new appear, and the number of those things that appear mysterious, wonderful and incomprehensible, is increased by it. I offer it only as a farther manifestation of what of Divine truth the Word of God exhibits to the view of our minds concerning this great mystery.

I think the Word of God teaches us more things concerning it to be believed by us than have been generally believed, and that it exhibits many things concerning it exceeding [i.e., more] glorious and wonderful than have been taken notice of; yea, that it reveals or exhibits many more wonderful mysteries than those which have been taken notice of; which mysteries that have been overvalued are incomprehensible things and yet have been exhibited in the Word of God tho they are an addition to the number of mysteries that are in it. No wonder that the more things we are told concerning that which is so infinitely above our reach, the number of visible mysteries increases.

When we tell a child a little concerning God he has not an hundredth part so many mysteries in view on the nature and attributes of God and His works of creation and Providence as one that is told much concerning God in a Divinity School; and yet he knows much more about God and has a much clearer understanding of things of Divinity and is able more clearly to explicate some things that were dark and very unintelligible to him; I humbly apprehend that the things that have been observed increase the number of visible mysteries in the Godhead in no other manner than as by them we perceive that God has told us much more about it than was before generally observed.

Under the Old Testament the Church of God was not told near so much about the Trinity as they are now. But what the New Testament has revealed, tho it has more opened to our view the nature of God, yet it has increased the number of visible mysteries and they thus appear to us exceeding wonderful and incomprehensible. And so also it has come to pass in the Church being told [i.e., that the churches are told] more about the incarnation and the satisfaction of Christ and other Gospel doctrines.

It is so not only in Divine things but natural things. He that looks on a plant, or the parts of the bodies of animals, or any other works of nature,

at a great distance where he has but an obscure sight-of it, may see something in it wonderful and beyond his comprehension, but he that is near to it and views them narrowly indeed understands more about them, has a clearer and distinct sight of them, and yet the number of things that are wonderful and mysterious in them that appear to him are much more than before, and, if he views them with a microscope, the number of the wonders that he sees will be increased still but yet the microscope gives him more a true knowledge concerning them.

God is never said to love the Holy Ghost nor are any epithets that betoken love anywhere given to Him, tho so many are ascribed to the Son, as God's Elect, The Beloved, He in Whom God's soul delights, He in Whom He is well pleased, etc. Yea such epithets seem to be ascribed to the Son as tho He were the object of love exclusive of all other persons, as tho there were no person whatsoever to share the love of the Father with the Son. To this purpose evidently He is called God's Only Begotten Son, at the time that it is added, "In Whom He is well pleased." There is nothing in Scripture that speaks of any acceptance of the Holy Ghost or any reward or any mutual friendship between the Holy Ghost and either of the other Persons, or any command to love the Holy Ghost or to delight in or have any complacence in [the Holy Ghost], tho such commands are so frequent with respect to the other Persons.

That knowledge or understanding in God which we must conceive of as first is His knowledge of every thing possible. That love which must be this knowledge is what we must conceive of as belonging to the essence of the Godhead in it's first subsistence. Then comes a reflex act of knowledge and His viewing Himself and knowing Himself and so knowing His own knowledge and so the Son is begotten. There is such a thing in God as knowledge of knowledge, an idea of an idea. Which can be nothing else than the idea or knowledge repeated.

The world was made for the Son of God especially. For God made the world for Himself from love to Himself; but God loves Himself only in a reflex act. He views Himself and so loves Himself, so He makes the world for Himself viewed and reflected on, and that is. The same with Himself repeated or begotten in His own idea, and that is His Son. When God considers of making any thing for Himself He presents Himself before

Himself and views Himself as His End, and that viewing Himself is the same as reflecting on Himself or having an idea of Himself, and to make the world for the Godhead thus viewed and understood is to make the world for the Godhead begotten and that is to make the world for the Son of God.

The love of God as it flows forth ad extra is wholly determined and directed by Divine wisdom, so that those only are the objects of it that Divine wisdom chooses, so that the creation of the world is to gratify Divine love as that is exercised by Divine wisdom. But Christ is Divine wisdom so that the world is made to gratify Divine love as exercised by Christ or to gratify the love that is in Christ's heart, or to provide a spouse for Christ. Those creatures which wisdom chooses for the object of Divine love as Christ's elect spouse and especially those elect creatures that wisdom chiefly pitches upon and makes the end of the rest of creatures.

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Unbelievers Despise the Glory and Excellency of Christ

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders." **-- Acts 4:11**

Subject: Unbelievers set nothing by all the glory and excellency that is in Christ.

In the foregoing chapters we have an account of the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and of its extraordinary effects in their speaking boldly in the name of Jesus, and speaking many strange languages, and so being made the instruments of the sudden conversion of vast multitudes. And in the chapter immediately preceding, there is an account how Peter and John miraculously healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth; which, together with the word which they spake to

the people that flocked together on the occasion, was the means of a new accession to the church; so that the number of them that heard the word believed , as we are told in the fourth verse of this chapter, was about five thousand.

This sudden and extraordinary progress of the gospel greatly alarmed the priests and scribes, and other chief men among the Jews; so that they laid hands on Peter and John, and put them in hold, and the next day brought them forth to appear before them, and called them to an account for what they had done. They asked them particularly by what power, or by what name, they had wrought the miracle on the impotent man. Upon which Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, makes answer, "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, — Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner." The apostle quotes to them as now fulfilled, Psa. 118:22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner." This text, in that psalm, the apostle applies by telling them:

I. That *This is the stone*, i.e. this person of whom he had spoken in the foregoing verse, viz. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead.

II. That they were the *builders* spoken of. They before whom the apostle then was, and to whom he was speaking, were rulers, and elders, and scribes of the people, the high priest and other priests. They, as they were set to be rulers and teachers among God's people, by their office, were called to be builders of the church of God.

III. That they set this stone *at nought*. They had so done by refusing to accept of him. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not. And not only so, but they had openly manifested the greatest contempt of him. They had mocked him, scourged and spit upon him, and in derision crowned him with a crown of thorns, and arrayed him in a mock robe, and then had put him to a most ignominious death.

IV. That notwithstanding this, he was become the head of the corner. In spite of all that they could do, he had obtained the chief place in the building. God had made him the main foundation of it, by raising him from the dead, and so putting great honor upon him; by pouring out his Spirit, and enduing his disciples with extraordinary gifts; by suddenly converting so many thousands to be the followers of Christ. — They put him to death, that he might have no followers, concluding that that would utterly put an end to his interest in Judea. But they were greatly disappointed. For the gospel had incomparably greater success after Christ's death than before. God had accomplished that very thing which they endeavored to prevent by Christ's crucifixion, viz. Christ's being believed in and submitted to, as the great prophet of God, and prince of his people.

DOCTRINE

Unbelievers set at nought the glory and excellency in Christ.

I. They set at nought the excellency of his person. — Christ is a great and glorious person, a person of infinite worthiness, on which account he is infinitely esteemed and loved of the Father, and is continually adored by the angels. But unbelievers have no esteem at all for him on that account. They have no value for him on account of his being the Son of God. He is not set the higher in their esteem on the account of his standing in so near and honorable a relation to God the Father. He is not valued at all the more for his being a divine person. By his having the divine nature, he is infinitely exalted above all created beings. But he is not at all exalted by it in their esteem. They set nothing by his infinite majesty. His glorious brightness and greatness excite not any true respect or reverence in them.

Christ is the holy One of God. He is so holy that the heavens are not pure in his sight. He is possessed of all that holiness which is the infinite beauty and loveliness of the divine nature. But an unbeliever sets nothing by the holiness of Christ. — Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. But an unbeliever sets nothing by his power and wisdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and mercy. The mercy and love of God appear no where else so brightly and gloriously as they do in the face of Jesus Christ. — But an unbeliever sets no value at all upon the

infinite grace of Christ.

Neither do unbelievers set anything by those excellent virtues which appeared in Christ's human nature when he was upon earth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was meek and lowly of heart. He was patient under affliction and injuries. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. But unbelievers set nothing by these things in Jesus Christ. — They very often hear how excellent and glorious a person Christ is. They are told of his holiness, and grace, and condescension, and meekness, and have the excellencies of Christ plainly set forth to them; yet they set all at nought.

II. They set at nought his excellency in his work and office. They are told how glorious and complete a mediator he is, how sufficient to answer all our necessities, and to save sinners to the uttermost. But they make light of it all; yea, they make nothing of it. They hear of the wonderful wisdom of God in contriving such a way of salvation by Christ. They have the manifold wisdom of God set forth to them. But they make no account of the excellency of this way of salvation.

The unbeliever hears what a wonderful thing it was, that he who was in the form of God, and esteemed it no robbery to be equal with God, should take upon him the human nature, and come and live in this world in a mean and low condition. — But he makes nothing of this. He hears much of the dying love of Christ to sinners, how wonderful it was that so glorious a person, who is infinitely above the angels, should so set his love on such worms of the dust, as to come and be made a curse for them, and die a cruel and ignominious death in their stead. But he sets nothing by all this. This dying love of Christ is of no account with him. Those great things that Christ hath done and suffered are with him light matters.

Unbelievers not only set *little* by the glory and excellency of Christ, but they set *nothing* by these things. Notwithstanding all the shows and pretenses which many natural men make of respect to Christ, by speaking honorably of him in their prayers, and in their common conversation, and by coming to sacraments, and attending other ordinances of Christ; yet indeed they do not set so much by all the glory and excellency of Christ — either of his person, or of his work as a Savior — as they do by the

smallest earthly enjoyment.

I proceed now to mention some *evidences* of the truth of this doctrine.

First, they never give Christ any *honor* on account of his glory and excellency. They may, and often do, pay Christ an external and seeming respect; but they do not honor him in their hearts. They have no exalting thoughts of Christ, no inward respect or reverence towards him. All their outward worship is only feigned; none of it arises from any real honor or respect in their hearts towards Christ. It is either only for fashion's sake, and in compliance with custom, or else it is forced, and what they are driven to by fear, as we read, Psa. 66:3, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." In the original it is, *shall thine enemies lie unto thee*, i.e. yield a feigned obedience. Through the greatness of Christ's power, and for fear of his wrath, his enemies who have no respect or honor for him in their hearts, will lie to him, and make a show of respect when they have none.

An unbeliever is not sensible that Christ is worthy of any glory, and therefore does not at all seek the glory of Christ in anything that he does. He does nothing in religion out of respect to Christ's glory, but wholly for other ends; which shows that he sees not Christ to be worthy of any glory. — Christ is set last and lowest in the heart of an unbeliever. — He has high thoughts of other things. He has high thoughts of created objects and earthly enjoyments, but mean and low thoughts of Christ.

The unbeliever shows the mean and contemptible thoughts that he has of Christ, in refusing to accept of him, and in shutting the door of his heart against him. Christ stands at the door and knocks, and sometimes stands many years knocking at the door of his heart, but he refuses to open to him. — Now it certainly shows that men have a very mean thought of a person, when they shut him out of their doors. Unbelievers show the mean and dishonorable thoughts they have of Christ, in that they dare not trust him. They believe not what he says to be true. They will not trust the word of Christ, so far as the word of one of their honest neighbors, or of a servant whom they have found to be faithful. It also appears that they have no real honor for Christ in the hearts, in that they refuse to obey his commands. They do nothing from a spirit of obedience to him. And that

external obedience which they render is but a forced, feigned obedience, and not from any respect to Christ's authority or worthiness to be obeyed.

Second, they have no *love* to him on account of his glory and excellency. If they saw any excellency in Christ, they would have some measure of love to him. But the truth is, they see no form or comeliness in Christ, and hence they have no love at all to him. An unbeliever never exercises one act of true love to Christ. All that he is told of his divine perfections, of his holiness, his meekness, and grace, has no influence at all to draw forth any love. The display of these things doth no more draw forth love out of the heart of an unbeliever than it draws forth love from the stones and rocks.

A natural man hath no love of benevolence towards Christ. Notwithstanding all that is declared to him of the excellency of Christ, he has no good-will toward him. He rejoices not in his glory and happiness. He would not care what became of Christ, if he could but escape hell. If Christ should be dethroned, or should cease to be, he has not so much goodwill to Christ, as would make him concerned about it. And if the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world should go to ruin, it would be nowise grievous to the unbeliever, provided his own interest could be secure.

So also an unbeliever has no love of complacency in Jesus Christ for his excellency. He takes no delight in the consideration of that excellency of Christ of which he is told. — He is told that it is exceedingly beautiful and glorious. But the thoughts of the glory of Christ are nowise entertaining to him. He has no delight in the thoughts of it, or in any contemplations upon it. He takes delight in thinking of earthly objects. But when he comes to turn his mind upon Jesus Christ, if ever he so does, this is to him a dry and barren subject; he finds nothing there to feed and delight his soul; no beauty or loveliness to please or gratify him

Third, unbelievers have no *desires* after the enjoyment of Christ. If they did set anything by the excellency of Christ, they would have some desires after him on account of that excellency; especially when he is offered to them, and is from time to time set forth as the proper object of their choice and desires. That which men prize, they are wont to desire,

especially if it be represented to them as attainable, and as fit and suitable for them. But unbelievers only desire to be delivered from hell, but not to enjoy Christ.

They cannot conceive what happiness there can be in beholding Christ and being with him, in seeing his holiness, and contemplating his wonderful grace and divine glory. They have no relish for any such thing, nor appetite after it.

Fourth, they show that they set at nought the glory and excellency of Christ, in that they seek not a conformity to that glory and excellency. A natural man may seek to be holy, but it is not for holiness' sake, it is only that he may escape wrath. He has no desires after holiness, nor is it indeed holiness that he seeks, because he is all the while an enemy to holiness. A natural man has no desires to have his soul conformed to the glorious beauty and excellency of Christ, nor to have his image upon him.

If he prized or delighted in the excellencies of Christ, he would necessarily desire to be like him so far as he could. — This we see in ourselves and in all men. When we see any qualifications in others that are pleasing to us, it is natural for us to endeavor to imitate, and to be conformed to those persons. Hence men are apt to learn of those for whom they have a great esteem; they naturally fall into an imitation of their ways and manner of behavior. But natural men feel within themselves no disposition or inclination to learn of Christ, or to imitate him. Their tempers and dispositions remain quite contrary to Christ's. Neither do they grow at all better or more conformed to him, but rather worse. 2 Tim. 3:13, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."

APPLICATION

I. This doctrine may teach us the heinousness of the sin of *unbelief*, as this sin sets all the glory and excellency of Christ at nought. It often appears strange to natural men, that unbelief should be spoken of as such a heinous and crying sin. They cannot see such evil in it. There are other sins which often trouble their consciences, when this troubles them not at all, though it be that which brings far greater guilt upon them, than those sins about which they are more troubled.

What has been said may show why unbelief is spoken of as a heinous sin, John 3:18, and Chap. 16:9, and 1 John 5:10. For thereby all the glory of Christ is set at nought, though it be so great, though it be infinite, though it be the glory of the Godhead itself, and though it has been so gloriously manifested in what Christ has done and suffered. Natural men, in their unbelief, cast contempt on all this glory, and tread it under foot, as being nothing worth. Their unbelief treats the excellency of Christ as being of less value than the meanest earthly enjoyments.

II. This doctrine may convict natural men in four particulars.

First, hereby you may be convinced of the greatness of your guilt. Consider how great and excellent that Person is, whom you thus set at nought. Contempt of any person is heinous in proportion to the worthiness and dignity of the person contemned. Though we are but worms of the dust, and very vile, sinful creatures; yet we take it grievously when we are despised. Consider how you yourselves are ready to resent it, when any of your neighbors seem to slight you, and set light by what you say and do, and to make no account of it, but to treat you as if you were good for nothing, or not worth minding. Do you take this well of your neighbors and equals, when you observe anything of this nature? Are you not ready to look upon it with resentment, to think very ill, and to judge that you have great cause to be offended?

But if it be such a crime to despise you and set you at nought, what is it to set at nought the eternal infinitely glorious Son of God, in comparison with whom you and all nations are nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity? You dislike it much to be contemned by your equals. But you would take it yet more grievously to be despised by your inferiors, by those whom, on every account, you must excel, — What a crime is it then for a vile, sinful worm, to set at nought him who is the brightness of the glory of the King of kings!

It would be a crime inexpressibly heinous, to set little by the glory and excellency of such a person. But it is more so, to set nothing at all by it, as you do. You have no value at all for it, as has been shown. And this is the more aggravated, as Christ is a person whom you so much need, and as he came into the world out of infinite grace to sinners, to lay down his life

to deliver them from hell, and purchase for them eternal glory. How much has Christ done and suffered, that you might have opportunity to be saved! Yet you set nothing by the blood of Christ, even that blood that was shed for such poor sinners as you are, and that is offered to you for your salvation. But you trample under foot the blood of the Son of God. If Christ had come into the world only to teach us, it would have been a heinous thing to trample under foot his word and instructions. But when he came to die for us, how much more heinous is it to trample under foot his blood!

Men take it hardly to have any of their qualifications or actions despised, which they esteem commendable. But especially do they highly resent it when others slight their kindness. And above all when they put themselves out of their way, and have denied themselves, and suffered considerably to do others a kindness; then to have their kindness despised and set at nought, is what men would above all things resent. How heinous then is it, and how exceedingly provoking to God must it be, thus to set at nought so great kindness and love of Christ, when from love to sinners he suffered so much!

Consider how highly the angels, who are so much above you, do set by the glory and excellency of Christ. They admire and adore the glory of Christ, and cease not day nor night to praise the same in the most exalted strains. Rev. 5:11, 12, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing". The saints admire the excellency of Christ, and the glorious angels admire it, and every creature in heaven and earth, but only you unbelieving children of men.

Consider not only how much the angels set by the glory of Christ, but how much God himself sets by it; for he is the darling of heaven, he was eternally God's delight; and because of his glory God hath thought him worthy to be appointed the heir of all things, and hath seen fit to ordain that *all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father*. — Is he thus worthy of the infinite esteem and love of God himself? And is he

worthy of no esteem from you?

Second, hereby you may be convinced of your danger. You must needs think that such guilt will bring great wrath. Dreadful destruction is denounced in Scripture against those that despise only the disciples of Christ, Mat. 18:6. What destruction then will come on them that despise all the glorious excellency of Christ himself ?

Consider that you not only have no value for all the glory and excellency of Christ; but you are enemies to him on that very account. The very ground of that enmity and opposition which there is between your hearts and Jesus Christ, is the glorious perfections and excellencies that there are in Jesus Christ. By being such a holy and excellent Savior, he is contrary to your lusts and corruptions. If there were a Savior offered to you that was agreeable to your corrupt nature, such a Savior you would accept. But Christ being a Savior of such purity, holiness, and divine perfection, this is the cause why you have no inclination to him, but are offended in him.

Instead of being a precious stone in your eyes, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to you. That he is a Savior who hath manifested such divine perfections in what he hath done and suffered, is one principal reason why you set nothing by him. Consider how provoking this must needs be to God the Father, who has given his only-begotten Son for your salvation; and what wrath it merits from the Son whom you thus treat. And consider how you will hereafter bear this wrath.

Consider that, however Christ be set at nought by you, he shall be the head of the corner. Though you set him low, yet he shall be exalted even with respect to you. It is but a vain thing for you to make light of Christ and treat him with contempt. How much soever you contemn him, you cannot break his bands asunder, nor cast his cords from you. You will still be in his hands. While you despise Christ, God will despise you, and the Lord will have you in derision. God will set his King on his holy hill of Zion in spite of all his enemies; Psa 2:1-6. Though you say, We will not have this man to reign over us, yet Christ will rule over you; Psa 110:2, “Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” If you will not submit to the scepter of his grace, you shall be subject to the rod of his wrath, and he

will rule you with a rod of iron; Psa 2:9-12.

Third, you may hence be led to see how worthless many of those things in yourselves are, that you have been ready to make much of. Particularly, if you set nothing by all the glory of Christ, what are those desires that you have after Christ good for? And that willingness that you think you find to come to Christ? Sinners are often wont to excuse themselves in their unbelief, because they see not but that they are willing to come to Christ and would gladly come to him if they could. And they make much of such desires, as though God were unjust to punish them for not coming to Christ, when they would gladly come if they could. But this doctrine shows that your willingness and desires to come to Christ are not worthy to be mentioned as any excuse. For they are not from any respect to Christ, but are merely forced. You at the same time set nothing by all his excellency and glory.

So you may hence learn the worthlessness of all your pains and endeavors after Christ. When sinners have taken a great deal of pains to get an interest in Christ, they are wont to make a righteousness of it; little considering that at the very time they are taking so much pains, they set nothing at all by Christ for any glory or excellency there is in him; but set him wholly at nought, and seek him out of respect to their own interest.

Fourth, hence learn how justly God might forever refuse to give you an interest in Christ. For why should God give you any part or interest in him whom you set at nought, all whose glory and excellency you value not in the least, but rather trample it under your feet.

Why should God give you any interest in him whom you so despise? Seeing you despise him, how justly might you be obliged to go without any interest in him! How justly might you be refused any part in that precious stone, whose preciousness you esteem no more than that of the stones of the street! Is God obliged to cast such a pearl before swine who will trample it under their feet? Is God obliged to make you possessors of his infinitely glorious and dear Son, when at the same time you count him not worth the having, for the sake of any worth or excellency that there is in him; but merely because you cannot escape hell without him?

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A Warning to Professors

"That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. More over this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house." **-- Ezekiel 23:37, 38, 39**

INTRODUCTION

Subject: When they that attend ordinances of divine worship allow themselves in known wickedness, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting those ordinances.

Samaria and Jerusalem, or Israel and Judah, are here represented by two women, Aholah and Aholibah. And their idolatry and treachery towards their covenant God is represented by the adultery of these women. They forsook God, who was their husband, and the guide of their youth, and prostituted themselves to others. The baseness of Aholah and Aholibah towards God their husband is here pointed out by two things, *viz.* adultery and bloodshed: *They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands.*

I. They committed adultery with other lovers, *viz.* with their idols: *With their idols have they committed adultery*.

II. They not only committed adultery, but they took their children that

they bore to God, and killed them for their lovers. Their hearts were quite alienated from God, their husband, and they were so bewitched with lust after those other lovers, that they took their own children, whom they had by their husband, and put them to cruel deaths, to make a feast with them for their lovers. As it is said in verse 37, "And have also caused my sons whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them."

But here is a twofold wickedness of those actions of theirs held forth to us in the words.

First, the wickedness of them considered in themselves. For who can express the horrid baseness of this their treatment of God, their husband?

Second, an additional wickedness, resulting from the joining of these actions with sacred things. Beside the monstrous wickedness of these actions in themselves considered, there was this which exceedingly increased the guilt, that on the same day they came into God's sanctuary, or that they lived in such wickedness at the same time that they came and attended the holy ordinances of God's house, pretending to worship and adore him, whom they all the while treated in such a horrid manner. And so herein defiled and profaned holy things, as in verse 38 and 39, "Moreover, this have they done unto me; they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary, to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house."

DOCTRINE

When they that attend ordinances of divine worship allow themselves in known wickedness, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting those ordinances.

By a divine ordinance, when the expression is used in its greatest latitude, is meant anything of divine institution or appointment. Thus we call marriage a divine ordinance because it was appointed by God. So civil government is called an ordinance of God. Rom. 13:1, 2, "Let every soul

be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are *ordained* of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the *ordinance* of God."

But the word is more commonly used only for an instituted or appointed way or mean of worship. So the sacraments are ordinances. So public prayer, singing of praise, the preaching of the word, and the hearing of the word preached are divine ordinances. The setting apart of certain officers in the church, the appointed way of discipline, public confession of scandals, admonition, and excommunication are ordinances. These are called the ordinances of *God's house,* or of public worship. And these are intended in the doctrine. It is the profanation of these ordinances that is spoken of in the text: "They came into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midst of mine house," says God. This *doctrine* seems to contain two *propositions.*

SECTION I

The ordinances of God are holy

DIVINE ordinances are holy in the following respects:

I. They are *conversant* wholly and immediately about God, and things divine. When we are in the attendance on the ordinances of divine worship, we are in the special presence of God. When persons come and attend on the ordinances of God, they are said to come before God, and to come into his presence. Jer. 7:10, "Come and stand before me, in this house which is called by my name." Psa. 100:2, "Come into his presence with singing."

In divine ordinances, persons have immediate intercourse with God, either in applying to him, as in prayer and singing praises, or in receiving from him, waiting solemnly and immediately on him for spiritual good, as in hearing the word; or in both applying to God and receiving from him, as in the sacraments. They were appointed on purpose that in them men might converse and hold communion with God. We are poor, ignorant, blind worms of the dust. And God did not see it meet that our way of intercourse with God should be left to ourselves. But God has given us his

ordinances, as ways and means of conversing with him.

In these ordinances, holy and divine things are exhibited and represented. In the preaching of the word, holy doctrines and the divine will are exhibited. In the sacraments are represented our faith, love, and obedience.

II. The *end* of God's ordinances is holy. The immediate end is to glorify God. They are instituted to direct us in the holy exercises of faith and love, divine fear and reverence, submission, thankfulness, holy joy and sorrow, holy desires, resolutions, and hopes. True worship consists in these holy and spiritual exercises, and as these divine ordinances are the ordinances of worship, they are to help us, and to direct us in such worship as this.

III. They have the sanction of *divine authority*. They are not only conversant about a divine and holy object, and designed to direct and help us in divine and holy exercises, but they have a divine and holy author. The infinitely great and holy God has appointed them, the eternal Three in One. Each person in the Trinity has been concerned in their institution. God the Father has appointed them, and that by his own Son. They are of Christ's own appointment, and he appointed, as he had received of the Father. John 12:49, "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." And the Father and Son more fully revealed and ratified them by the Spirit. And they are committed to writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They are holy, in that God has hallowed them, or consecrated them. They are conversant about holy things. And God ordained them that in them *we* might be conversant about holy things. They are for a holy use. And it is God who, by his own immediate authority, ordained them for that holy use, which renders them much more sacred than otherwise they would have been.

IV. They are attended *in the name* ofGod. Thus we are commanded to do all that we do, in word or deed, in the name of Christ, Col. 3:17, which is to be understood especially of our attendance on ordinances. Ordinances

are administered in the name of God. When the word is preached by authorized ministers, they speak in God's name, as Christ's ambassadors, as co-workers together with Christ. 2 Cor. 5:20, "Now we are ambassadors for Christ." Chap. 4:1, "We are workers together with him." When a true minister preaches, he speaks as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. 4:11. And he is to be heard as one representing Christ.

So in administering the sacraments, the minister represents the person of Christ. He baptizes in his name, and in the Lord's supper stands in his stead. In administering church-censures, he still acts, as the apostle expresses it, in the person of Christ, 2 Cor. 2:10. On the other hand, the congregation, in their addresses to God in ordinances, as prayer and praise, act in the name of Christ, the Mediator, as Having him to represent them, and as coming to God by him.

SECTION II

God's ordinances are dreadfully profaned by those who attend on them, and yet allow themselves in ways of wickedness.

PERSONS who come to the house of God, into the holy presence of God, attending the duties and ordinances of his public worship, pretending with others, according to divine institution, to call on the name of God, to praise him, to hear his word, and commemorate Christ's death, and who yet, at the same time, are wittingly and allowedly going on in wicked courses, or in any practice contrary to the plain rules of the Word of God, therein greatly profane the holy worship of God, defile the temple of God and those sacred ordinances on which they attend. The truth of this proposition appears by the following considerations.

I. By attending ordinances, and yet living in allowed wickedness, they show great *irreverence* and contempt of those holy ordinances. When persons who have been committing known wickedness, as it were the same day, as it is expressed into the text, and attend the sacred solemn worship and ordinances of God, and then go from the house of God directly to the like allowed wickedness — they hereby express a most irreverent spirit with respect to holy things, and in a horrid manner cast contempt upon God's sacred institutions, and on those holy things which

we are concerned with in them.

They show that they have no reverence of that God who has hallowed these ordinances. They show a contempt of that divine authority which instituted them. They show a horribly irreverent spirit towards that God into whose presence they come, and with whom they immediately have to do in ordinances, and in whose name these ordinances are performed and attended. They show a contempt of the adoration of God, of that faith and love, and that humiliation, submission, and praise, which ordinances were instituted to express. What an irreverent spirit does it show, that they are so careless after what manner they come before God! That they take no care to cleanse and purify themselves, in order that they may be fit to come before God! Yea, that they take no care to avoid making themselves more and more unclean and filthy!

They have been taught many a time that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and how exceedingly he is offended with sin; yet they care not how unclean and abominable they come into his presence. It shows horrid irreverence and contempt, that they are so bold, that they are not *afraid* to come into the presence of God in such a manner, and that they will presume to go out of the presence of God, and from an attendance upon holy things, again to their sinful practices. If they had any reverence of God and holy things, an approach into his presence, and an attendance on those holy things, would leave that awe upon their minds, that they would not dare to go immediately from them to their ways of known wickedness,

It would show a great irreverence in any person towards a king, if he should not care how he came into his presence, and if he should come in a sordid habit, and in a very indecent manner. How much more horrid irreverence does it show, for persons willingly and allowedly to defile themselves with that filth which God infinitely hates, and so frequently come into the presence of God!

II. By making a show of respect to God in ordinances, and then acting the contrary in their lives, they do but *mock* God. In attending ordinances, they make a show of respect to God. By joining in prayer, in public adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, they make a show

of high thoughts of God, and of humbling themselves before him; of sorrow for their sins, of thankfulness for mercies, and of a desire of grace and assistance to obey and serve God. By attending upon the hearing of the word, they make a show of a teachable spirit, and of a readiness to practice according to the instructions given. By attending on the sacraments, they make a show of faith in Christ, of choosing him for their portion, and spiritually feeding upon him.

But by their actions they all the while declare the contrary. They declare, that they have no high esteem of God, but that they despise him in their hearts. They declare, that they are so far from repenting of, that they intend to continue in, their sins. They declare, that they have no desire of that grace and assistance to live in a holy manner for which they prayed, and that they rather live wickedly. This is what they choose, and for the present are resolved upon. They declare by their actions that there is no truth in what they pretend in hearing the word preached, that they had a desire to know what the will of God is, that they might be directed in their duty. For they declare by their actions, that they desire not to do the will of God, and that they do not intend any such thing. But intend, on the contrary, to disobey him. And that they prefer their carnal interests before his authority and glory.

They declare by their actions that there is not truth in what they pretend in their attendance on the sacraments that they desire to be fed with spiritual nourishment, and to be conformed and assimilated to Christ, and to have communion with him. They show by their practices that they have no regard to Christ, and that they had rather have their lusts gratified, than to be fed with his spiritual food. They show, that they desire not any assimilation to Christ but to be different from him, and of an opposite character to him. They show that instead of desiring communion with Christ, they are his resolved and allowed enemies, willfully acting the part of enemies to Christ, dishonoring him, and promoting the interest of Satan against him.

Now, what can this be else but mockery, to make a show of great respect, reverence, love, and obedience, and at the same time willfully to declare the reverse in actions. If a rebel or traitor should send addresses to his king, making a show of great loyalty and fidelity, and should all the while

openly, and in the king's sight, carry on designs of dethroning him, how could his addresses be considered other than mockery? If a man should bow and kneel before his superior, and use many respectful terms to him, but at the same time should strike him, or spit in his face, would his bowing and his respectful terms be looked upon in any light than as done in mockery? When the Jews kneeled before Christ, and said *Hail, King of the Jews*, but at the same time spit in his face, and smote him upon the head with a reed, could their kneeling and salutations be considered as any other than mockery?

Men attend ordinances, and yet willingly live in wicked practices, treat Christ in the same manner that these Jews did. They come to public worship, and pretend to pray to him, to sing his praises, to sit and hear his word. They come to the sacrament, pretending to commemorate his death. Thus they kneel before him, and say, *Hail, King of the Jews*; yet at the same time they live in ways of wickedness, which they know Christ has forbidden, of which he has declared the greatest hatred, and which are exceedingly to his dishonor. Thus they buffet him, and spit in his face. They do as Judas did, who came to Christ saying, *Hail, Master*, and kissed him, at the same time betraying him into the hands of those who sought his life.

How can it be interpreted in any other light, when men come to public worship, and attend ordinariness, and yet will be drunkards and profane swearers, will live in lasciviousness, injustice, or some other known wickedness? If a man should pray to God to keep him from drunkenness, and at the same time should put the bottle to his own mouth, and drink himself drunk; the absurdity and horrid wickedness of his conduct would be manifest to every man. But the very same thing, though not so visible to us, is done by those who make profession of great respect to God, and pray God from time to time to keep them from sin; yet at thesame time have no design to forsake their known sins, but intend the contrary.

God sees men's designs and resolutions more plainly than we can see their outward actions. Therefore for a man to pray to God to be kept from sin, and at the same time to intend to sin, is mockery as visible to God as if he prayed to be kept from some particular sin, which he was at the same time willingly and allowedly committing.

These persons are guilty of a horrid profanation of God's ordinances. For they make them occasions of a greater affront to God, the occasions of showing their impudence and presumption. For he who lives in willful wickedness, and does not enjoy the ordinances of God, is not guilty of so great presumption as he who attends these ordinances, and yet allows himself in wickedness. This latter acts as though he came into the presence of God on purpose to affront him. He comes from time to time to hear the will of God, and all the while designs disobedience, and goes away and acts directly contrary to it.

A servant would affront his master by willfully disobeying his commands in any wise. But he would affront him much more, if he should on every occasion come to him to inquire his will, as though he were ready to do whatever his master would have him do, and then should immediately go away and do the contrary.

III. They put the ordinances of God to a *profane use*. The ordinances of God are holy, as they are set apart of God to a holy use and purpose. They are the worship of God, instituted for the ends of giving honor and glory to him, and to be means of grace and spiritual good to us. But those persons who attend these ordinances, and yet live in allowed wickedness, aim at neither of these ends. They, in their attendance on ordinances, neither aim to give honor to God, or to express any love, or esteem, or thankfulness. Nor do they sincerely seek the good of their own souls. It is not truly the aim of any such persons to obtain grace, or to be made holy. Their actions plainly show that this is not their desire. They choose to be wicked, and intend it.

It is not therefore to these purposes that they improve the holy ordinances of God. But they put them to another and profane use. They attend ordinances to avoid that discredit which a voluntarily and habitual absence from them would cause among those with whom they live, to avoid the punishment of human laws, or for their worldly advantage, to make up for other wickedness, or for some other carnal purposes. Thus they profane the ordinances of God, by perverting them to profane purposes.

IV. When persons thus treat God's holy ordinances, it tends to *beget contempt* of them in others. When others see sacred things commonly used so irreverently, and attended with such carelessness and contempt, and treated without any sacred regard; when they see persons are bold with them, treat them without any solemnity of spirit; when they see them thus commonly profaned, it tends to diminish their sense of their sacredness, and to make them seem no very awful things. In short, it tends to embolden them to do the like.

The holy vessels and utensils of the temple and tabernacle were never to be put to a common use, nor to be handled without the greatest care and reverence. For if it had been commonly otherwise, the reverence of them could not have been maintained. They would have seemed no more sacred than anything else. So it is in the ordinances of Christian worship.

SECTION III

A call to self-examination.

LET this doctrine put all upon *examining* themselves, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness. You are such as do enjoy the ordinances of divine worship. You come into the holy presence of God, attending on those ordinances, which God, by scared authority, has hallowed and set apart, that in them we might have immediate intercourse with himself, that we might worship and adore him, and express to him a humble, holy, supreme respect, and that in them we might receive immediate communications from him.

Here you come and speak to God, pretending to express your sense how glorious he is, and how worthy that you should fear and love him, humble yourselves before him, devote yourselves to him, obey him, and have a greater respect to his commands and to his honor, than to any temporal interest, ease, or pleasure of your own. Here you pretend before God, that you are sensible how unworthily you have done by sins committed in times past, and that you have a great desire not to do the like in time to come. You pretend to confess your sins, and to humble yourselves for them. Here you pray that God would give you his Spirit to assist you against sin, to keep you from the commission of it, enable you to

overcome temptations, and help you to walk holy in all your conversation, as though you really had a great desire to avoid such sins as you have been guilty of in time past. And the like pretenses you have made in your attendance upon the other ordinances, as in hearing the word, in singing praise, etc.

But consider whether you do not horribly defile and profane the public prayers and other ordinances. Notwithstanding all your pretenses, and what you seem to hold forth by your attendance on them, do you not all the while live in known wickedness against God? For all your pretenses of respect to God, of humiliation for sin, and desires to avoid it, have you not come directly from the allowed practice of known sin to God's ordinances, and did not at all repent of what you had done, nor at all sorry for it at the very time when you stood before God, making these pretenses, and even had no design of reformation, but intended to return to the same practice again after your departure from the presence of God? — I say, has not this, on many occasions, been your manner of coming and attending on the ordinances of divine worship? Not only so, but is it not still your manner, your common way of attending upon these ordinances, even to this very day? Do you not lie to God with your tongues, when you pretend, that he is a great God, and that you are poor, guilty, unworthy creatures, deserving his wrath by the sins of which you have been guilty? And when you pretend that you earnestly desire he would keep you from the like for time to come? Are you not guilty of horrid mockery of God in it, when at the same time you design no such thing, but the contrary?

Do you not even the same day that you come into God's house, and to his ordinances, allow yourselves in known sins? Do you not with consent and approbation think of the sinful practices, in which you allow yourselves, and in which you have been exercising yourselves in the week past? Do you not the very day in which you attend ordinances, allowedly please and gratify a wicked imagination? And are you not then perpetrating wickedness in your thoughts, and contriving the further fulfillment of your wickedness? Yea, are you not guilty of these things sometimes even in the very time of your attendance on ordinances, when you are in the immediate presence of God? And while others have immediate

intercourse with God, and you likewise pretend to the same? Do you not, even in these circumstances, allow yourselves in wicked thoughts and imaginations, voluntarily wallowing in known wickedness?

Are not some of you guilty of allowedly breaking God's holy Sabbath, in maintaining no government of your thoughts, thinking indifferently about anything that comes next to mind; and not only thinking, but talking too about common, worldly affairs? And sometimes talking in such a manner, as is not suitable even on other days, talking profanely, or in an unclean manner, sporting and diverting yourselves in such conversation on God's holy day? Yea, it is well if some have not been thus guilty in the very time of attendance on the ordinances of worship.

Examine yourselves, how it has been with you. You all attend many of the ordinances of divine worship. You come to the house of God, attend public prayers, singing, and preaching of the word. And many of you come to the Lord's supper, that holy ordinance, instituted for the special commemoration of the greatest and most wonderful of all divine acts towards mankind, for the special and visible representation of the most glorious and wonderful things of our religion, for the most solemn profession and renewal of your engagement to God, and for special communion with Jesus Christ. Let such examine themselves whether they do not allow themselves in known sin, to the horrid profanation and pollution of his most sacred ordinance.

Examine and see whether you do not allow yourselves in some way of dealing with your fellow-men, which you have sufficient light to know to be evil; or whether you do not allow yourselves in a known evil behavior towards some person or persons of the families to which you respectively belong, as towards your husbands, your wives, your children, or servants; or your neighbors, in your spirit and behavior towards them, or in your talk of them.

Examine whether you do not some way willingly indulge an unclean appetite, in less or grosser acts of uncleanness, or in you discourse, or in you imagination. Or do you not give way to a lust after strong drink, or indulge yourselves in some vicious excess in gratifying some sensual appetite in meat or drink, or otherwise? Are you not willingly guilty of

vanity, and extravagance in your conversation?

Do you not, for all your attendance on ordinances, continue in the allowed neglect of your precious souls, neglecting secret prayer or some known duty of private religion? Or do you not allow yourselves in Sabbath-breaking? — In all these ways are the ordinances of God's sacred worship polluted and profaned.

Men are apt to act very treacherously and perversely in the matter of self-examination. When they are put upon examining themselves, they very often decline it, and will not enter into any serious examination of themselves at all. They hear uses of examination insisted on, but put them off to others, and never seriously apply them to themselves. — And if they do examine themselves, when they are put upon it, they are exceedingly partial to themselves. They spare themselves. They do not search, and look, and pass a judgment according to truth, but so as unreasonably to favor and justify themselves — If they can be brought to examine themselves at all, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness, although they attend on divine ordinances, they will not do it impartially. Their endeavor will not be indeed to know the truth of their case, and to give a true answer to their consciences, but to blind themselves, to persuade and flatter themselves that they do not allow themselves in known sin, whether it be true or not. There are two things especially wherein persons often act very perversely and falsely in this matter.

I. Persons very often deal very perversely in pretending that the sins in which they live are *not known* sins. Nothing is more common surely, than for persons to flatter themselves with this concerning the wickedness in which they live. Let that wickedness be almost what it may, they will plead to their consciences, and endeavor to still them, that there is no evil in it. Men's own consciences can best tell how they are wont to do in this matter. — There is hardly any kind of wickedness that men commit, but they will plead thus in excuse for it. They will plead thus about their cheating and injustice, about their hatred of their neighbors, about their evil speaking, about their revengeful spirit, about their excessive drinking, about their lying, their neglect of secret prayer, their lasciviousness, their unclean dalliances. Yea, they will plead excuses for

very gross acts of uncleanness, as fornication, adultery, and what not. They have their vain excuses and carnal reasonings in favor of all their evil actions. They will say, What harm, what evil is there in such and such an action? And if there be a plain rule against it, yet they will plead that their circumstances are peculiar, and that they are excepted from the general rule, that their temptation is so great, that they are excusable. Or something will they find to plead.

If it be some thing upon which their lusts are much set, and about which they feel remorse of conscience, they will never leave studying and contriving with all the art and subtlety of which they are masters, till they shall have found out some reason, some excuse, with which they shall be able in some measure to quiet their consciences. And whether after all they shall have made it out to blind conscience or not, yet they will plead that their argument is good, and it is no sin. Or if it be a sin, it is only a sin of ignorance. — So men will plead for the wickedness which they do in the dark. So without doubt some very *gross* sinners plead to their consciences, as would appear, if we could but look into their hearts. When indeed the strongest argument they have, *that in such a thing there is no evil,* is the strongest lust they have to it, the inordinate desire they have to commit it.

It was the saying of one, *Licitis perimus omnes;* that is, *We all perish by lawful things;* which is as much as to say, man commonly live wickedly and go to hell, in those ways which they flatter themselves, that they are sins of ignorance, they do not know them to be unlawful. — Thus, I make no doubt some will be apt to do, in applying to themselves this use of examination, if they can be persuaded to apply it to themselves at all. Whether these things be true of you, let your own consciences speak, you that neglect secret prayer; you that indulge an inordinate appetite for strong drink; you that defraud or oppress others; you that indulge a spirit of revenge and hatred toward your neighbor. — Here I desire you to consider two or three things.

First, not all sins, which one knows not with a certain knowledge to be sinful, are justly called sins of ignorance. Men often will excuse themselves for venturing upon a sinful action or practice, with this, that they know not that it is sinful, which is at most true no otherwise, than as

they do not know it to be sinful with a *certain* knowledge, or with the evidence of absolute demonstration; although at the same time it is a sin against their light, and against great light. They have been so taught, that they have had light enough to make them sensible that it is displeasing to God, and not warranted or allowed by him. And they do in their consciences think it to be sinful. They are secretly convinced of it, however they may pretend the contrary, and labor to deceive themselves, and to persuade themselves that they do not think there is any evil in it.

Those sins which are contrary to sufficient information and instruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own consciences, or to the judgment of their own minds, whether there be certain or demonstrative knowledge or no, these are what I would be understood to mean, when I speak of known sins. Such light as this, whether there be absolutely certain knowledge or no, is sufficient to render the action utterly inexcusable, and to render it, when allowed, a horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.

Second, it is vain for persons to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, which they have often and clearly heard testified against from the Word of God. It will be found to be so at last. It will be found to be a vain thing for persons who have lived under the light of the gospel, and where all manner of iniquity is testified against, if they live in immoral and vicious practices, to pretend that they are sins of ignorance, unless the case be very peculiar and extraordinary.

Third, it is in vain for you to pretend that those are sins of ignorance, of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice, if you knew that your soul was to be required of you this night. Persons do many things, for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as soon eat fire, as do the same, if they knew that they were to stand before the judgment seat of Christ within four and twenty hours. This shows that persons do but prevaricate, when they pretend that their sins are sins of ignorance.

II. Another way wherein men deal falsely and perversely in this matter is in pretending that they do *not allow* themselves in those sins which they practice. They either pretend that they know them not to be sins, or if

they cannot but own that, then they will say, they do not allow themselves in them. And so they hope God is not very much provoked by them. They pretend this, though they make a trade of them. They go on repeating one act after another, without ever seriously repenting of past, or resolving against future acts. But take heed that you do not deceive yourselves in this matter. For such pretenses, however they do something towards stilling your consciences now, will do nothing when you come to stand before your righteous and holy Judge.

SECTION IV

Address to such as attend ordinances, and yet allow themselves in known sin.

Consider how holy and sacred the ordinances of God are. What mockery you are guilty of in making such a show, and such pretenses in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverse of what you pretend. Consider that there is no sort of sinners with whom God is so provoked, and who stand so guilty before him, as the profaners of his ordinances. The fire of God's wrath id kindled by none so much as by the polluters of holy things. They are represented as those who are especially guilty before God, in the third commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but because the breach of it especially renders a man guilty in the sight of God?

The taking of God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do in a very dreadful manner take God's name in vain, who attend on his ordinances, and yet live in known sin. For, as we have shown, they manifest the greatest irreverence for him, and contempt of divine things. They manifest a contempt of his authority, a contempt of the business and design of his ordinances, and a most careless and irreverent spirit in things wherein they have immediate converse with God. Ordinances, as we have shown, are attended in the name of God. And therefore, by such an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You that attend ordinances in such a manner, take the name of God so much in vain, that you use it only in mockery, and so as to expose it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is

a trampling of all that is sacred under foot.

We have in Scripture scarce any such awful instances of the immediate and miraculous vengeance of God, as on the profaners of holy things. How did God consume Nadab and Abihu, for offering strange fire before him! How did he break forth upon Uzza, for handling the ark with too much irreverence! 2 Sam. 6:6, 7. And how did he break forth on the children of Israel at Bethshemesh, for profaning the ark! "He smote of the people fifty thousand threescore and ten men," as in 1 Sam. 6:19.

And God has threatened in the New Testament, that if any man "defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy," 1 Cor. 3:17. There is an emphasis in the expression. God will destroy all sinners, let it be what sin it will which they commit, and in which they continue; and yet it is said, "If any man defile the temple of God, *him* shall God destroy," as if it had been said, there is something peculiar in the case, and God is especially provoked to destroy such, and consume them in the fire of his wrath. And he will indeed destroy them with a destruction especially dreadful.

So God has declared, Gal. 6:7, "That he will not be mocked;" i.e. if any presume to mock him, they will find him by experience, to be no contemptible being. God will vindicate his holy majesty from the contempt of those who dare to mock him, and he will do it effectually. They shall fully find how dreadful a being he is, whose name they have daringly profaned and polluted. Defilers and profaners of ordinances, by known and allowed wickedness, provoke God more than the heathen, who have no ordinances. Thus the wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem is said to be far worse than that of Sodom, though the inhabitants of Sodom were, as we have reason to think, some of the worst of the heathens. See Eze. 16:46, 47, etc. The sin of Sodom is here spoken of as a light thing in comparison with the sins of Judah. And what should be the reason, but that Judah enjoyed holy things which they profaned and polluted, which Sodom had no opportunity to do? For it is not to be supposed, that Judah otherwise arrived to the same pass that Sodom had.

Consider therefore, ye who allow yourselves in known wickedness, and live in it, who yet come to the house of God, and to his ordinances from

time to time, without any serious design of forsaking your sins, but, on the contrary, with an intention of continuing in them, and who frequently go from the house of God to your wicked practices, consider how guilty you have made yourselves in the sight of God, and how dreadfully God is provoked by you. It is a wonder of God's patience, that he does not break forth upon you, and strike you dead in a moment. For you profane holy things in a more dreadful manner than Uzza did, when yet God struck him dead for his error. And whereas he was struck dead for only one offense. You are guilty of the same sin from week to week, and from day to day.

It is a wonder that God suffers you to live upon earth, that he has not, with thunderbolt of his wrath, struck you down to the bottomless pit long ago. You that are allowedly and voluntarily living in sin, who have gone on hitherto in sin, are still going on, and do not design any other than to go on yet. It is a wonder that the Almighty's thunder lies still, and suffers you to sit in his house, or to live upon earth. It is a wonder that the earth will bear you, and that hell does not swallow you up. It is a wonder that fire does not come down from heaven, or come up from hell, and devour you, that hell-flames do not enlarge themselves to reach you, and that the bottomless pit has not swallowed you up.

However, that you are as yet born with, is no argument that your damnation slumbers. The anger of God is not like the passions of men, that it should be in haste. There is a day of vengeance and recompense appointed for the vessels of wrath. And when the day shall have come, and the iniquity shall be full, none shall deliver out of God's hand. Then will he recompense, even recompense into your bosoms.

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